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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of volume 2 of a quarterly bulletin for educators in Australia providing a practical focus to improving boys' schooling. The April 1999 issue focuses on the role of school executives, or administrators, on supporting educational initiatives. This issue includes articles describing the development of a program-based approach at a state high school and the subsequent evolution of a more holistic agenda for local feeder schools, efforts to change the entrenched rugby culture at a high school, a primary school father involvement program, a primary level father and child camp program, and the use of negotiation programs to change school culture. The July 1999 issue contains articles on: identifying depression in boys; using community volunteers to improve learning outcomes for boys; features of women's leadership with boys; working with indigenous boys; and rebuilding the school atmosphere after a suicide. The October 1999 issue includes articles on a mentoring program to address boys' anger, ideas about masculinity, rites of passage to manhood, a high school program in which boys run an on-site business, a high school creative-arts-based initiative, and an assessment of a Year 8 boys program. The December 1999 issue focuses on boys' physical and social involvement and contains articles describing initiatives that engage boys either physically or through making decisions about their school, including a game program, a program in which boys uphold positive values on the playground, and the use of self-defense for training in communication skills and social development. (KB)

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The Boys in Schools Bulletin:

Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs, 1999

Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne, Editors

Volume 2, Numbers 1-4

April-December 1999

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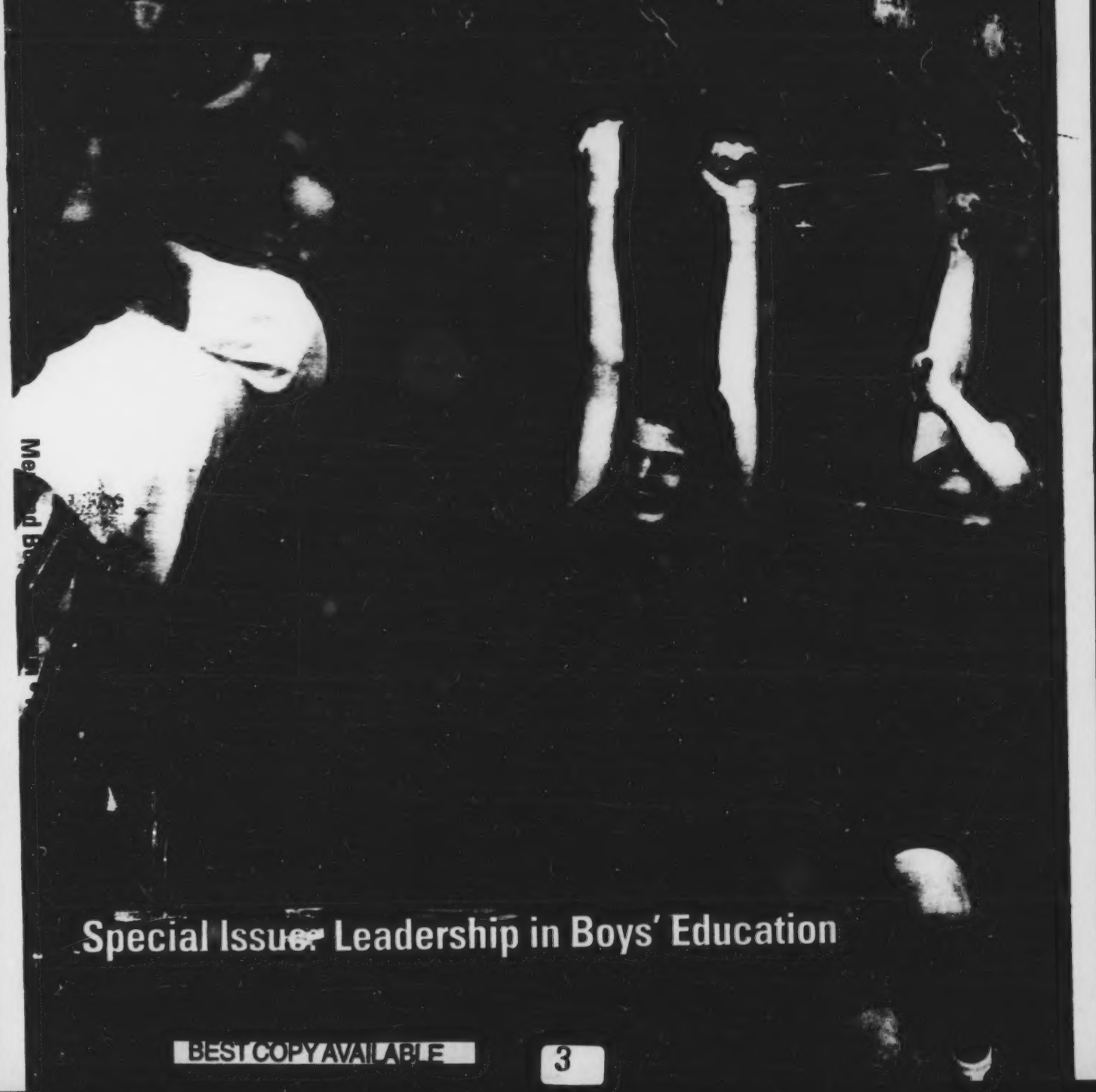
Vol 2 • No 1 • 1999

The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN • Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs



Special Issue: Leadership in Boys' Education

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ABOUT THE BULLETIN

A focus on practical initiatives going on in schools

Putting teachers in touch with others who are trialing new approaches to boys' education

Support and encouragement for a constructive debate on boys' education issues

Develop materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys

Provide advice on the suitability of new resources directed at boys

Editorial

When classroom teachers identify the most important factors in successfully initiating a boys' program, 'getting support from the school executive' is often at the top of the list. However school leaders can do more than support staff-initiated programs, they can provide leadership across the entire area of boys' education. To provide leadership in any area of education requires skill, understanding and commitment. In the area of Boys' Education, where policy frameworks are lacking and community concern is high, the task is particularly difficult. Two schools' efforts are highlighted in this edition of the Bulletin. Shona McKinlay describes the development of a program-based approach for boys at Maryborough State High School and the subsequent evolution of a more holistic agenda embracing local feeder schools. At Blacktown Boys' High School John Craig tackled the entrenched rugby culture which, while promoting some avenues for boys, clearly failed to meet the educational needs of the boys in the school. The speeches of the two Year 12 boys from Blacktown Boys, (see pages 14 & 16), provide clear evidence of change while suggesting the future benefit to society of addressing boys' needs.

At both Maryborough and Blacktown, fundamental changes were required in the understanding of staff and boys. As both leaders readily admit however, the process of developing best practice in boys' education is far from over. The notion of "what sort of men" we want from our schools is far from settled.

The question of the type of men to be valued by the school was the starting point for a different approach at a Victorian primary school. At St. Augustine's in Wodonga, the 'Dads in School' group formed from this question has developed an impressive agenda of male involvement spanning classroom, playground and tuckshop activities. At St. Mary's Primary School in Eastern Victoria, fathers have been attending the annual Father and Child Camps for more than seven years. Principal Peter Carr describes the organisation of the camps and their effect on the community.

At Freemans Bay School in Auckland, New Zealand the role of the deputy in encouraging treaty-based approaches in all classes was central. However the focus of this report is on the work of classroom teacher Donal Maclean negotiating a cooperative culture with Year 3 and Year 4. Negotiation on an individual basis is the feature of Exit Plans drawn up for 'boys who don't fit' at Eltham High School. Finally there is the school program at Surrey Downs where the school oval was the site for a novel attempt at 'outdoor education' for some Year boys.

This edition of the Bulletin, is being prepared for delivery at the end of first term. The second edition, which will be mailed in June after the *Leadership in Boys Education National Forum*, will continue to document the role of school executive in improving schooling for boys. Schools considering sending staff to the July Conference *Working with Boys Building Fine Men* described in this Bulletin should ensure that their registration is completed as early as possible. The *Leadership in Boys Education National Forum* was swamped with applications and many schools had their checks returned after the conference venue limit was reached. Since the July conference, which features international speakers and a practical skills component, is expected to appeal to a wide audience, we would like to ensure subscribers are alerted to the conference as early as possible. The venue for the July conference only seats 500.

Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne

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The cover photo is from Surrey Downs School, SA. See story on page 22.

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Guidelines for Contributors

The BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content is meant to motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- Say a bit about your school
- What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?
- What happened?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at a previous issue of the Bulletin. Or contact us and talk about it.

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But when we did the survey, it came out overwhelmingly that dads, uncles, family members and friends were their role models

Boys can do better

Maryborough State High School is a co-educational school with approximately 1080 students. It draws from the low socio- economic area of Maryborough and the surrounding rural district. Shona McKinlay was Deputy Principal, and Acting Principal during the years 1996 -1998. She is currently acting Principal at Hervey Bay State High School. She spoke to Richard Fletcher about the development of Boys' Education at Maryborough.

How did you get started?

Well, before I formed a committee I wrote a series of newsletter articles because I was in charge of the newsletter. They gave some statistics and figures and general trends and I asked parents if they were interested in them to contact me. That also generated interest on staff and from that we formed a committee. That was just after Easter in 96.

Did parents contact you?

Yes - In fact I get lots of parents contacting me, we had four or five at the first meetings to form a committee. We lost it with them after that. They were still very supportive of the program but they saw it as more of a education thing. So the committee had me, the senior coordinator, the head of English and an art teacher. Other teachers were involved of course but we four really did have a lot of energy and drive.

So what did you do first?

We drew up an action plan of what we wanted to do. We were very enthusiastic. We each elected to read some books and magazines, to collect newspaper articles, to look into what other schools were doing and look at school and state statistics. Part of this information became a school survey.

We surveyed all of the male students at our school, and got some surprises. We had assumed that male role models for boys were, you know, like footballers, basketballers, and well-known male figures. We thought 'How are we ever going to be able to do anything with boys when we can't afford to sort of have those type of people visiting the school?' But when we did the survey, it came out overwhelmingly that dads, uncles, family members and friends were their role models. So the whole emphasis of our program obviously had to change.

What about the male staff members?

There was a wide range of responses to that question. We initially thought it would be just the Physical Education staff. Although they did rate highly, the kids had a whole range of males within the school setting, even the principal!

So we changed direction. We had been thinking of how we get powerful males to come to the school. After the survey we focused talking to the boys and having male forums within the school. We had an activity day where one team member led a session on power with all grade eight and 10 boys to get across the idea that there are different types of power: it doesn't have to be 'power over', it can be 'power with'. And Ken Bycroft, the Head of English developed that whole idea of a dad's night and we would never have done that had we had not done the survey.

In 1997 we initiated a range of programs. Before the start of school where we had Rollo Browne come up and we had a community launch at the town hall. We thought if 30 people turn up we would be really happy and we just packed out the hall - it was just amazing. We noticed how many were mums. That really struck us and that led to the dads' nights too.

Rollo did the evening session with the parents and people were just thrilled. He enthused them and he sort of enrolled them in the whole thing. We had people there from all the schools in Maryborough and even some of the Hervey Bay schools and so it became a community focus. The next day we had a staff session and that launched the project.

Could you comment on the initiatives that year?

We had about half the 45 Year 11 boys teed up with the same number of grade 8's in the Big Brother program. And that had limited success. It was good but some Year 11 boys were in it to get their community service up so that they could be prefects the next year. We didn't carry on in the next year because it didn't have outstanding results and the person who organised it left the school.

The Boys and Books program that Barb Christie ran, on the other hand, has developed well. [Boys in Books was described in the last Boys in Schools Bulletin - Ed] Because the boys were doing it in their lunch breaks they found it very difficult to have their normal friendships.

Now we have a 'learning for living' group in Studies in Society that is a lower academic level and has two teachers. So we introduced it there as part of the curriculum. The boys have now been trained in 'Support a Reader' and they go to the primary school that is just across the paddock twice weekly during lesson time as part of their program.

When I visited the primary school, I talked to the kids who were there. They just loved it. They thought it was terrific and they were very organised, they had their folders and they had stickers for kids. The teachers at the primary school thought it was a great program too because they were getting the help they needed with those kids who weren't reading very well. We had a big morning tea - a joint primary school and high school morning tea - and handed out certificates at the completion of it.

The leadership mentoring project involved boys that we identified as having potential to be leaders but not having the get up and go or not having the skills to write the application to highlight their best assets. And it was clear that boys were not getting elected into prefect positions. From 89 through to 96 you can see that once we introduced the criteria-based system the number of girls skyrocketed. The boys thought it was too much bother to go through the process or had seen that the boys from the previous years failed.

The teachers at the primary school thought it was a great program too because they were getting the help they needed with those kids who weren't reading very well

MARYBOROUGH STATE HIGH SCHOOL CAPTAINS AND PREFECTS

YEAR	BOYS		GIRLS	
1989	1 capt	7 pref	1 capt	8 pref
1990	1 capt	10 pref	1 capt	14 pref
1991	1 capt	10 pref	1 capt	9 pref
1992	2 capt	11 pref	2 capt	12 pref
1993	2 capt	10 pref	2 capt	13 pref
Criteria-based system introduced				
1994	2 capt	6 pref	2 capt	27 pref
1995	2 capt	11 pref	2 capt	40 pref

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The idea of the Beacon Program was that teacher would develop activities with the boys in the class and be someone that the boys could approach and talk to

The leadership program worked for individuals. It has not brought our boys' prefect rate up greatly. Because it was not 'I am going to chase you and I am going to meet you here', it was 'This teacher said he would like to mentor you, you contact the teacher'. Then we would leave it in the hands of the student, and a lot of times the student just didn't do it. But for the kids that did, it worked.

The idea of the Beacon Program was that teachers would develop activities with the boys in the class and be someone that the boys could approach and talk to. It was up to the individual teachers how far they went. But Ken went as far as developing the dads and lads night and providing that information to the others who then were able to do whatever they wanted.

What about the parent discussion forums?

This is where we started to venture more into the choice theory. When we had the launch at the beginning of the year in 97, Rollo Brown was asked by parents: 'Everything that you were talking about here is about relationships. How do we fix relationships with our kids?' and Rollo answered 'Choice theory'. I had just done choice theory training and some parents came up to me at the end of the evening and said that they wanted to know about choice theory. So a group of us who had done the training decided to work with parents on a very basic Choice Theory course: what choice theory was and how it could help in relationships in the home. We ran that for two years. In the two introductory courses we probably had about 30 parents at each. Then we all just got too busy. Our region split into two and we struggled on for a while in the two districts but it just made it very difficult.

Could you say more about the shift in your thinking that happened over this period?

Well there were many. I have already said that we were surprised at the first survey. We started on the quality school idea because the programs we were running were high energy activities that required huge amount of input from teachers and we were not seeing stunning results. We had just a few people carrying the load, where it should be a team effort and a shared philosophy. That is why we wanted to bring in the quality school concept, although it's not strictly what William Glasser would call a quality school. It is our version of it. In 1998, we have about 100 staff and we put 66 people through choice theory training last year and there will be another couple of groups this year. So we are getting closer to realising a shared philosophy there. These programs did contribute by raising awareness. We had parents questioning what they were doing with their boys and we had teachers questioning what they were doing. Certainly the boys began questioning what was going on. When the *Girls Can Do Anything* stickers came out the boys were coming up to me and saying 'Come on Miss, where are ours?' So we did up some stickers on the computer and we had *Boys Can Do Better* because that was to be our conference title. The boys loved them.

How did the conference fit into developments at your school?

During our initial year in 96 we looked at all of the things we wanted to do and we said really it was too late by the time they get to high school. Although that is not true. But we said 'Wouldn't it be great if we could do these things back in primary school'. So we formed that group and a lot of the time Maryborough High was suggesting ideas and helping the other schools develop their things. Then in 1998 we started work on the *Boys Can Do Better* conference. That was all we did in 98 apart from the things that were running by themselves and the critical Literacy and the Dads and Lads nights.

The conference was a way of answering questions. Because I had gone on ABC radio a couple of times prior to the launch in 97 people would ring up from all over Queensland. People were constantly ringing and saying 'You were talking about a report can you tell me what you do?' And so we needed to stem that flow. We also wanted to raise awareness in other schools of what could be done with boys and we wanted to get someone else, another resource person to give parent talks and raise staff awareness and enthusiasm, to involve all the Fraser District group. And people like that cost money. So the conference was a way of doing all those things. But I have to say it became huge - bigger then Ben Hur. So that really took up 1998.

We also wanted to raise awareness in other schools of what could be done with boys

Did it have the effect you wanted?

Yes, I got a phone call the other day from a fellow who is running a conference at Ferny Grove to say 'Thank you, we are running a conference here and we wouldn't have done it without your conference last year'. It was certainly successful on the two days. We had to turn people away. We had around 250 attend and then we had the parent community meeting on that first night at the RSL that you took. There were 300 at that. And then, we found out later, someone had advertised the wrong night - the following night - in the local paper. So the following night there were another 200 parents who turned up. But we weren't there, the RSL had to turn all these paying customers away.

We are not sure whether we will need all of the boys things that we have been doing in the past. We will still maintain the Boys and Books because that's within the curriculum so that's no effort and we will still maintain a focus on literacy. We will probably have a Boys in Education Quality Schools Group to look at boys in education, the curriculum and quality school concepts. So we are trying to put it all under one heading so that it becomes an inclusive practice rather than an add on .

Will that be on a regional basis?

No - we have gone away from the district regional stuff we are just focusing on Maryborough High again. We have done what we wanted to do for the district, now we are focusing on the boys in Maryborough High. But the Fraser district group still meets and I am trying very hard to get a male chairperson, instead of me.

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Big Brother Program at Maryborough

This program has been developed to address two needs within the school. Firstly, Year 11 boys were missing out on formal leadership roles such as Prefect as they did not have appropriate community service experience. Secondly, some Year 8 boys found the transition from Primary to Secondary school a little daunting and looked as though they needed a little extra attention.

Year 11 boys are teamed with Year 8 boys to spend at least one lunch break per week together. They are to be a positive role model, not a body guard. Activities can include, going to the library, going to training, playing sport and special visits. The Year 11 student signs a contract which is given to the Year 8 partner. This activity helps boys develop skills and to assist them plan for the future, it provides community service experience and makes the boys plan activities to assist other boys.

Interest in the program has been excellent but there have been some difficulties. A review of the program emphasised the need for training of Year 11 volunteers, separate interviews with pairs, ongoing training and regular whole group activities as well as weekly kids meetings.

Boys in Leadership - Mentoring

This project has been undertaken in response to concerns that the numbers of boys in the 'merit based' leadership framework were on the decline. This program provides the extra attention boys need to achieve the experiences required to become prefects. It is aimed at Year 11 boys who are motivated and have nominated for Year 12 Prefect but are considered 'marginal'. Using the list of boys who nominate for prefect (beginning of Year 11) all male applicants are interviewed about their progress in achieving the selection criteria. During the interview we ascertain the need for a mentor and discuss their first and second choice of teachers who could act as a mentor for them.

Mentors are approached by the committee initially and then by the student. The mentor and student work out meeting times. No mentor would have more than two students assigned to them.

The Beacon Program

The 'Beacon' program is being initiated for Grade 8 form classes only. Male form/class teachers are approached to be the beacon for the boys of each form class. The role of the Beacon teacher is to foster the development of communication between males: student and Beacon Teacher, student and father, father and school. Beacon teachers: become involved in extra curricula activities with boys and their fathers, work with other male teachers to develop activities, identify talent and nurture it.

Dads & Lads Night

Students write invitations and fathers (significant adult males) are contacted by phone. Samples of the boys' work are collected from different subject areas. A typical program might include games, a display of the boys' work, a presentation on statistics related to boys and a supper with discussion.

Boys and Books

Boys from the junior high school go to the adjacent primary school three times a fortnight to assist in a reading program with Year 2 boys. [The Boys and Books program is described in more detail in the last Boys in Schools Bulletin Vol 1 No 4.]

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(The photos used in this article show Year 7 boys tutoring Year 2 boys)

we decided to see if we could engage dads more in the learning and schooling process

What sort of men do we want our boys to grow into?

Phil Bretherton, Principal, St. Augustine's School, Wodonga, Victoria.

This was the starting point for gathering interested dads to talk about their son's education in our primary school.

St. Augustine's is a Catholic Primary school with an enrolment of 310. It is located on the Murray River in Wodonga, Victoria. Our school has a strong community focus and has been supporting families with schooling for over 100 years. Like many primary schools, there are many parents who came and help with programs. 1 suspect, like other schools, these parent helpers are predominantly women

Given the level of information about boys literacy and the importance of parental role modelling, we decided to see if we could engage dads more in the learning and schooling process:

Meeting One: (July 1998) Dads and other interested significant men were given written invitations by their sons to come to school for an evening on boys' learning. More than 70 men attended to look at some of the emerging national trends and our own local scene. The men were surveyed about their level of interest in following up the evening. There was overwhelming support to continue to gather.

Meeting Two: (October 1998) More than 60 dads came to school with their children, both boys and girls, for a breakfast gathering. This started at 7.00 a.m. and went through to about 8.30 am. A whiteboard was used to gather suggestions for involvement at school.

Meeting Three: (March 1999) A call was put out for any interested dads to come for a BBQ tea, around 6.30 p.m., to look at establishing a core group of 'dads in school'. Around 22 men turned up to establish the beginning of a parents group for men.

The group brainstormed the following goals for 1999 for involvement at school.

- Supporting the ongoing development and implementation of CLaSS (an early years literacy strategy)
- Assisting with the development of technology across the school
- Supporting the schools building and maintenance program
- A mens discussion group on 'raising boys'
- Helping with an update of the school cyclical development plan
- Assisting (with training) in the schools reading program
- Helping with playground supervision
- Helping with tuckshop
- Attending weekly assemblies and special events
- Acting as guest speakers on different careers and the link with learning

At St. Augustine's we have been delighted with the level of support for our 'Men in schools' initiative and a regular monthly gathering seems the certain outcome for supporting ongoing development. Since our discussions started, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of dads who drop in to school. Some dads seem to feel welcomer than they did previously. We are targeting parent information more effectively. Our ultimate aim is to assist boys in developing more positive attitudes to learning and to assist the male role models in their lives to become partners in the process.

Phil Bretherton will be presenting at the LEADERSHIP IN BOYS' EDUCATION National Forum at The University of Newcastle in May.

Students conducting the Talented Students Program

They don't even run the military like that anymore

Blacktown Boys' High School is a comprehensive high school (700 boys) in Sydney's western suburbs with approximately 40% of students from a non-English speaking background. John Craig was appointed principal in 1995. He was interviewed by Richard Fletcher.

What did you do first?

When I moved from Canterbury Girls to Blacktown Boys. My first impressions of the place was a school that physically, in terms of the buildings and so on, was pretty good. Looking at the staff profile I saw that a lot of people had been there a long time and that it was a very male staff. There were only two females on the executive of 12.

...the Head Teacher Administration's full time job was handling violent incidents. The school had only one icon - football (Rugby League)

One of the first things that I did was to get the Quality Assurance Review (QA Review) which was scheduled for Term 4 brought back as early as I possibly could. My belief was that the review process would be a good one for the school.

In the meantime I spent a lot of time gathering data: suspension rates; reasons for suspensions; how did the welfare system work?; how did the discipline system work?; what were the communication processes in the school?; what did the kids do at lunch time? I spent a lot of time in the playground at lunch time and recess seeing what the kids did. I interviewed every member of staff and asked them what they liked about the school, what they thought could be changed, very open ended questions.

Were you given a brief to introduce radical change?

There were certainly concerns. For example, the Director of Schools at the time was very concerned about an increase in suspension rate at the school. I was concerned about that too because it was around about a hundred suspensions a year. The Students Representative Council hadn't met for two years and the Head Teacher Administration's full time job was handling violent incidents. The school had only one icon - football (Rugby League). It didn't have multiple icons for everyone to relate to. One of the boys at the school in 92 won the triple crown at the Combined High Schools athletics in the 100, 200 and 400 metres, never been done before. No one knew about it. But we knew we had a footy team.

The QA Review focused the school on the fundamental issues of boys' education: the 'macho' culture based on sport and violence; disengagement of boys with the school; a welfare/discipline system based on coercion; teaching and learning processes based on high competition; declining academic achievement and low literacy levels; and, relatively little understanding among staff on Gender Equity Issues and the issues of boys' education.

The review recommended a fundamental change in teaching and learning, in student welfare and in school culture and organisation. The information provided by the review process was helpful because there was a thought in the school that we would be okay. All we need to do is run things tighter. By running it tighter was meant, tougher discipline, more suspensions, and more detentions. I guess it was a sort of military approach.

Now my feeling was that the harder you push a system the harder it will push back at you, and really what the review was saying to us as a school was 'Start again' and there was a lot of staff that said 'No we can't. We don't support the tougher discipline notions because it doesn't suit us personally and we can't do it'. Some people can't be the overbearing regimental sergeant major and I don't think a school can be run like that. They don't even run the military like that anymore. And there were a number of people in the school, quite a significant number, who did have other ideas about how the school could be run and what processes we could use in the school, so there was still that philosophical division.

We don't support the tougher discipline notions because it doesn't suit us personally and we can't do it

So what did you do?

I had to do two things. I had to rearrange how people thought, how the school thought, and get some consensus on that. At the same time I had to be doing something to stop things, to take people out of crisis mode and survival mode. So I moved on the 'Hands Off' policy. If you got involved in a fight you had an automatic two-day suspension. That was a bandaid until we could get some things in place in the school to retrain the thinking of the boys and also members of staff.

How did you do that?

We spent a long time on 'what sort of boy do we want to have at the end of 6 years?'. We went through probably four drafts it came out in essentially single word descriptors: responsible, self discipline, caring, tolerance, accountable for their own actions and so on. At the same time as that we had to get a code of conduct that the students had some faith in because there was a fair bit of thought amongst the kids (and the staff) that their input didn't matter.

So another group was working with the boys on what should be the behaviour rules in the school. Now the previous set of rules - there were 26 - no one in the school could tell me one of them. The kids didn't know, other then 'Do what you are told'. It was probably the main rule.

The boys were put into roll groups, they had butchers paper, and we extended role call to run for about an hour at time and they worked through a set of rules. Then it was worked through at a staff group until finally, after 8 to 10 months, we had a code of behaviours based on three things; learning, respect and safety. And that was the order that basically the kids and staff agreed on.

So we had about three or four things running parallel from 1995 after the review right into 97. For example, we did an analysis of the hours that the students spent on different subjects and electives, and how many teachers they had in year 7 or 8. And the students had anything between 14 and 17 teachers, then the relationships would suffer. So, there was a lot of things. And all this stuff was being fed back to the staff. 'Here's the data.' ' What do you make of that?.' A lot of staff found a lot of the changes did not make sense to them.

That was a really significant decision for the school because that was going to change the culture more significantly than anything

Now, we got to a crucial point; do we have a punitive system or do we have something like Glasser with a choice theory basis for it. That was a really significant decision for the school because that was going to change the culture more significantly than anything. Now, whilst all this was going on we sent staff out to other schools, to examine their curriculum and examine their welfare systems and we went to government and non-government and they brought back a number of - huge range of ideas at the time. And that was also destabilising for certain members of the staff.

It was left to myself and couple of members of the executive to convince staff that if we just had the new system without a different form of sanction with the students such as isolation, self contemplation and reflection, then it was going to be just the old system but with a different skin on it. And staff voted quite overwhelmingly to go to the new system. I can't remember the vote but it was something like 38 to 16 which, in teaching terms, is an avalanche. We proceeded to build supervision of an isolation room into the teaching load. We trialed it during 4th term 97 which was a good strategy because it gave people a focus, we had to work on things rather than winding things up. It also signalled to the kids that there was going to be changes.

We had to train the kids in the system, as well as training the staff. So it would be an equal situation where the kids knew as much as the staff. We stopped the school again and every member of staff had to go through a lesson plan of how the welfare system worked: these are the sanctions, these are your responsibilities. Everything was related to the code of behaviour. At the end of that hour and a bit, the students walked out of the room, in their hands was the one-page summary, which they had filled in, of how the system worked and what would occur at various stages.

Did you have trouble gaining uniform implementation?

Well we gave people a fair latitude in the first instance, and there were some differences. But then we ran an evaluation about half way through the next year. I got a teacher from another school, who didn't know the school and who would guarantee anonymity to interview the students and staff. Yes, she found, people did take short cuts. Yes, there were inconsistencies. So then we made another set of changes to begin 98. We refined the plan-making process with the students to make sure staff would work to get the kids to have substitute behaviours. So we still worked on Glasser's planning and contract model but we put it in a context of boys. These are the ways the boys react. These are the ways to keep it at a minimum level. This is what they see as good practice and so on. We used all the evaluation data that was fed back to us from the boys and the staff.

The change process was based around changing the structures, changing the processes and changing the relationships between students and staff and students and students. One of the significant shifts was making the periods 60 minutes. We also got rid of the morning assembly followed by reading. I just want you to picture this. You start with an assembly outside, the assembly goes on for fifteen minutes or more sometimes, and no one listens. Then the kids break up and go in all directions around the school for fifteen minutes of reading. Can you can imagine how much time was actually spent on reading? Then the bell went and they started moving again.

The day didn't start with any sense of order. So we wiped the assemblies in the morning. We have one a week and everything else is done in roll calls in rooms with notices. So all of a sudden the day starts with calm and quiet.

Another significant factor was the staff turnover. Some staff felt that the school had lost its focus. That is, sport was no longer the only thing that mattered in the school. Now when I asked the Head Teacher Sport to give me the numbers of students who represented the school in any or sport throughout the year it came to 150 out of 900 students in the school. So that left about 75% disenfranchised. On top of that the sports people got the brand new, flash jackets while the other kids were in uniforms that hadn't been revised for the best part of 15 years. So automatically you had a hierarchy.

We had to get the kids in uniform to get them into some sort of identity and to build their self esteem. We looked at the school cap for an icon. The cap was a big issue in the school with boys wearing different coloured caps. A couple of staff members worked with the boys to redesign it. They got the designs and held a referendum. The next thing we started was the uniform The seniors redesigned their uniform, the juniors redesigned theirs and that made a difference. Suddenly we weren't pushing the kids into having the uniform. They liked the uniform, there was no big issue all of a sudden. So that gave the kids some heart.

I was presented with an opportunity, which was quite sad, when the leading teacher died of cancer in early 96. I had to select a new leading teacher and shortly after that I had to select a new deputy. So I looked very carefully for someone who would have a good knowledge of boys' education issues and literacy and, if possible, was a woman. Because I thought the school essentially needed someone - not anyone - but an effective female in a senior executive position. And we found someone who could do the job.

Could you explain how your ideas about 'being a man' came into this process?

In 1995, the staff was not ready to really discuss the issue of masculinity and what defines a male. If I had said "lets run a session on homophobia" I think half of the staff would have gone through the ceiling. So what we ran was a number of days for seniors and then staff about anti discrimination laws.

We had the Western Area Adolescent Health Team run the sessions for the boys. For staff, we got a student from a nearby school, who had worked with the team, to relate some of the experiences that he had had as a student because he was gay. It was pretty horrendous stuff that he talked about. For some staff you could see the discomfort level - it was palpable because they never had to confront these issues directly. One of the questions from the staff was 'What percentage in the school or in the normal population would be gay?'. And the answer came back 'Between 5 and 10%'. Then the arithmetic was done and people realised that we were looking at between 100 and 200 kids. And that was shock. None of those issues had ever been discussed at the school.

We have had a holistic approach. We haven't had 15 different programs running and then brought them together. We have tried to get a very coherent approach and then add and polish that approach. In 97 and 98 we really started to dig into issues like 'Why won't boys engage with English?' The leading teacher took all staff through the session based on Nola Alloway's work on literacy and boys, the hidden curriculum at the school, masculinity, the boys culture, and so on.

We have changed the rituals to give us a sense of belonging and we have dramatically reduced violent incidents and suspensions. We have changed a fair bit of the teaching although there is still a fair bit to go. For example the notion of masculinity, how it impacts on you in the class with your teaching and learning, and our idea of 'what sort of boy do we want to have at the end of 6 years?'. We need to revisit our discussion of what constitutes being a man.

Was there a low point for you in this whole process?

I suppose the low point - there were probably many of them - was when we introduced the 'Hands Off' policy and the suspension rates continued to rocket. It required a fair bit of nerve to say 'It is not quite working, but we have to keep moving in this direction because basically we have crossed the river and there is no return'.

And the high point?

The high point was when we started to run assemblies and the boys didn't behave like they were at a footy match or a rock concert. They paid attention to their peers, they entered in an orderly fashion, they applauded things, they were engaged and it was a pleasant experience for everyone. And they could actually see themselves - the boys - running the assembly.

John Craig will be presenting at the Leadership in Boys' Education National Forum at The University of Newcastle in May.

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In their words

Speech by Peter Kefu

Year 12 student Blacktown Boys' High School, Anzac Day 1998

Honoured guests, parents, teachers and students

My name is Peter Kefu. I have been at Blacktown Boys' High School for 6 years. My family came from Tonga before I was born. I went to primary school at Seven Hills West just a few minutes away. My parents decided to send me to Blacktown Boys' High School because it was the closest to my home. I also had two older brothers, Richard and Selly who attended this school. It was just the natural thing to come here.

When I was in Year 6 I thought that Blacktown Boys' High School would be like starting Kindergarten over again. I felt nervous and at times sick and scared. In Year 6 I was the average size for my group but when I got to Blacktown Boys' High School the boys were all bigger.

Despite having 150 boys in Year 7 I felt lonely. All the kids from Seven Hills West were split up. I did not know anybody. I don't remember the teachers in Year 7 very much but I did learn to do my homework - which I did not do, to stay away from the toilets - which I did do - and stay out of trouble by being with Year 7. I learnt that the older boys were mean.

When I was in Year 8 I learnt how to make a few friends. By being with them in class and talking. In Year 8 it felt better to be in high school. I tried to learn how to pick my friends but some of them took me round the wrong corners. I was interested in surviving. Some teachers saw me in a different way. They believed that I had potential and ability. I did not believe this.

In Year 9 and 10 I started heading down hill. Wagging, not going to class. Yet again I got my chances. In Year 10 that's where they got me. The teachers they made me repeat. I felt pretty bad and did not want to be at school. I felt like a looser. I had run-ins with head teachers and year advisors. I had to come back to Year 10.

I told my mum that I had made it through to Year 11 but she caught me wearing a grey shirt. This was especially obvious when my older brother was wearing a white shirt. In Year 11 I changed. I started to listen in class. I really understood what the teachers were on about. I stopped dazing and mucking around.

All of a sudden our school had changed. A new Principal made new rules that we all helped to write, different teachers, the tragic loss of Mr Manuel who had given me so many chances. A welfare system that makes students feel comfortable by making the rules clear and understandable, learning - respect, safety, and hands off. A Hands-Off policy that students actually follow for once.

When we started Year 7 we did not have the help the boys now have, they have peer mediation, peer support. They can adjust so quickly. These systems make you feel better because we now mix together, all age groups, we don't feel scared to come to school. I've got a place I feel comfortable. I've grown up. I know what respect is. I've learnt to listen, to offer my opinion to speak my mind and my ideas. The teachers did not turn their back on me even though they knew what was going on.

If I had been asked to speak in Year 10 I would have truanted the day. On ANZAC Day this year I was volunteered / forced to speak as an assessment component. Again a teacher had faith in me. I was accepted as I am.

Our school has changed so much for the better. If you are a teacher or a student that has not taken the time to talk and listen to each other then it has and will continue to be your loss.

Thanks.

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Speech by Ismail Ozbayrak

Year 12 student Blacktown Boys' High School, Year 12 Final Assembly 1998

These changes also came at a time when I was naturally beginning to take greater responsibility in my own life, and as such, they were timely ones for me

Good Morning, my name is Ismail Ozbayrak and today is the final day of my high school life.

My link with the school began almost ten years ago when my older brother, Huseyin, decided to come to Blacktown Boys' High School instead of his local high school. Three years later my second eldest brother, Erdinc followed Huseyin to the school, obtaining the HSC last year. In 1993, it was a natural decision for me to enrol in Year 7 at the school.

Only a couple of my primary school friends came to the school that year. I felt way out of my depth. In Year 6, I felt powerful, but when I came to Year 7 it was like I was back down the bottom of the food chain. It didn't take long however, to feel a part of the school. I represented the school in the Panther Trophy that year. I remember clearly the psyched up session Mr Smith, one of the coaches of the side, put me through just before the final. He had me by the jersey, pushing and pulling me, vividly describing what I could and would be doing to the opposition when I ran onto the field. It psyched Mr Smith up. I just found it funny. Whatever Mr Smith and Mr Faull did for the team must have worked though. We won the competition that year. It would also be nice to believe that I played a major role in that win, but I think it had more to do with Chris Watling's try scoring abilities.

With the Panther Trophy and State Knockout out of the way, I went back to being just another Year 7 student. I had my fair share of disagreements with other students but I still remember to this day the first time I got into trouble for fighting.

I was given my first afternoon detention, by Mr Boole. I remember the slow and lonely walk from the senior block to the dais that afternoon. The other guy hadn't shown up. I was on my own. Five minutes ticked by, then ten, then fifteen. The suspense was unbearable. Finally, I decided to go and find out what was keeping Mr Boole. I walked bravely up to his closed door and knocked. A passing teacher interrupted my knocking and asked me what I wanted. I told him I was looking for Mr Boole, only to be informed that Mr Boole had already gone home and that my detention would have to be put off until tomorrow. I was devastated but relieved. I eventually did complete the detention. The incident did help me though, in that I became a little less afraid of the school and its punishments and maybe a little more respectful of its rules.

As I entered Year 9, a new Principal arrived at the school, Mr Craig. The changes he brought to the school, like the "Hands Off' Policy, I do believe were positive ones. The emphasis on personal control and responsibility clearly improved the tone of the classroom and the school as a whole. These changes also came at a time when I was naturally beginning to take greater responsibility in my own life, and as such, they were timely ones for me.

It was during Year 10 however, when I realised there was more I could do for the school than just keep my hands off my fellow students. I was chosen as a Peer Mediator that year and although I was only called upon once or twice to deal with problems, it meant a great deal to me in another way. It implied a respect from the staff that I had never really experienced before. I was 15 years old but I was beginning to be treated as an adult. In Year 11, I was accepted as a Peer Support Leader, while in Year 12 an even greater honour was to come my way. I was elected as one of the seven prefects from my year.

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I had found something I was naturally good at - helping others - and the school had played no small part in identifying and nurturing this talent.

I had found something I was naturally good at - helping others - and the school had played no small part in identifying and nurturing this talent.

There were only three higher honours available to me - Senior Prefect, Vice Captain and Captain. The choice was to be made following a speech given by each prefect in front an audience of our peers. I knew however before I spoke that day that I did not want to be chosen for any of these positions. Just reaching the position of Prefect was honour enough for me. I was not very proud of the speech I made that day. It was unprepared and a waste of everyone's time. Further, it deteriorated into a farce when one of my fellow students cracked a joke in the middle of my speech and was promptly asked to leave. I now think it would have been better to simply decline to speak and save everyone the embarrassment, but hey, you live and learn.

And that's what I have done at this school, live and learn. I clearly remember the efforts of an English teacher I had in Year 10 who taught me a simple formula for writing an essay, and although my current English teacher, Mr Walkom is probably now wondering why I never use it well, it was a very satisfying learning experience for me. I will also never forget a classroom discussion in another teacher's class that developed into an informal debate on racism. Considering the class was made up of students from many different cultural backgrounds, it was a friendly but thought-provoking moment, and it sticks clearly in my mind to this day.

Over the years I have seen my mates grow up, and hope that I keep in contact with as many of them as I can in the future. The friends that came with me to the school from Doonside Public all those years ago are long gone now. But the friendships I have today, with a core group of six or more mates, are much stronger.

I am also beginning to see a promising future for myself. Not that long ago, my aim was to become a labourer. But Hotel Management is what I am focusing on now. Those same skills that this school has helped foster in me over the past few years could just come in handy. We'll see what happens.

Blacktown Boys' High School has been an amazing journey for me. I leave it a wiser and better person.

Thank you.

Some students, usually young men, even with the greatest good will and skilful intervention on behalf of the school, do not fit

Exit Plans: An alternative for boys who don't fit

Helen Rix, Deputy Principal,
Eltham High School, Victoria

Sam's beguiling smile and sunny appearance belied his disruptive performance in most Year 11 classrooms, most days. He oscillated between passive resistance and good-humoured confrontation with staff, to dark days where his underlying frustrations turned into hostility. Frequent lateness and absences added to the familiar picture.

Sam was getting nowhere, and so were our strategies of co-ordinator monitoring and assistance, frequent reviews of his progress and referral to counselling. He was clear that he was happy with our school, and he didn't want to leave. But nothing about his performance suggested that he wanted to stay. At least, not on our terms.

"But he should be at school"

A number of conferences were held with his parents. Against overwhelming evidence they clung to the responsible view that Sam should be at school as he needed an education. The problem was that he wasn't getting one. The solution was borne out of desperation and a compromise. Sam could leave for the remaining three terms of the year, and be offered (in writing) a position in Year 11 in the following year. He wasn't being rejected by the school, but he needed a nine month time out. Sam was excited, his parents were pleased.

It worked. Sam had a range of part time jobs, enjoyed himself, and came to the conclusion that he wanted formal qualifications to "get somewhere". The following year he returned to school, and succeeded. When he returned his story was interesting to the other Year 11 students but most of them had already come to the conclusion that he had taken a year to reach: that school was important.

The Challenge We Face

Eltham High School is a large outer suburban co-ed high school in Melbourne with a population of 1230. Situated in a picturesque bush area the school draws students from a middle and lower middle class population. There are four level co-ordinators and a sub-school head appointed for each of the Junior, Middle and Senior sub-schools. Our teacher turnover is very low.

One of the challenges we face is to provide an appropriate education for all students. The reality is that it is impossible to do so. Some students, usually young men, even with the greatest good will and skilful intervention on behalf of the school, do not fit. Their challenging, disruptive behaviour, or their passive refusal to be involved in education shows this.

Alienated students are often obvious by the end of Year 7. More difficult challenging behaviour and risk taking become an issue for parents and the school by Year 8. High quality assessment and intervention by classroom teachers and support staff can and does bring about change in a number of cases. By Year 9, even with an elective program which caters for a range of interests and allows considerable choice, we would have about fifteen students mainly boys who are clearly on the road to nowhere. Not all the time, but their failures far exceed the occasional success.

Exit plans evolved as a way of providing the support, structure and respect young people need, and, at the same time, acknowledging the realities of mainstream schooling

How Exit Plans Started

Our school has a reputation for the provision of quality welfare services for students. We have developed this over ten years by using a planned approach and considerable resourcing to skill the co-ordinators in the areas of counselling, referral to networks of community agencies and in adolescent behaviour.

Exit plans evolved as a way of providing the support, structure and respect young people need, and, at the same time, acknowledging the realities of mainstream schooling. By this I mean students who have switched off from education require individual attention, patience, choice and resourcing beyond the means of the school. As well they are often challenging and disruptive presences for teachers and other students. Our experiences over the last ten years with students like Sam have slowly developed into the Exit Plan arrangements made for a small group of students.

Making Exit Plans Work

Exit plans follow the principles we apply in the management of all student behaviour: *we operate in a partnership with parents *we try to develop a co-operative, trusting relationship with the student with an emphasis on their responsibility *meetings are conducted calmly with everyone encouraged to be involved and heard and *we will not reject any student even though we may not be able to continue to offer them a place in our school.

The first step is to identify those students and work closely with them and their parents. In any given year we will focus on up to 20 students, usually in Middle School (Years 9 & 10). Identifying the range of possible options and strategies both within the school and in the community is the second step.

Our level co-ordinators have frequent contact with these students. Counselling, referral to psychologists, extra assistance with literacy and numeracy including modified programs and teaching unit placements are explored. Another option, often very useful, is a series of work experience placements.

Once school based options have been exhausted the following are considered: Referral to another educational setting: alternative school, community school, TAFE course. The Student Welfare Co-ordinator works closely with the parents and students in the transition process. The possibility of returning to the school at a later date remains, though is not made part of a formal contract.

Planning with the student and parents for a "time out" and re-entry into the school at a stated time. This requires a considerable period of work. It might involve some work experience placements usually through our Career Co-ordinator's contacts to find work (usually part time, usually limited to menial, repetitive jobs). The school keeps in some contact with the student, and a formal letter to the student acknowledges the school's commitment to keep a place for them. A copy is sent to the parents.

The letter states that the school offers a place in the following year, usually with some general conditions (employer references etc) and that the resources of the Career Co-ordinator and the Student Welfare Co-ordinator are available in the interim period. It ends on a personal note - good luck and may it all work out.

The Results

The outcomes vary. Some students, like Sam, return, having found a purpose and some commitment towards study. Some students find a place for themselves in the world of work, often complementing it with part-time study at a TAFE. Some students have returned to school and realised quickly that it still isn't for them. Some go on to a world of part time work and limited jobs.

Students leave with a clear understanding that the school has worked with them in finding a solution to the situation they were in. Significantly they have not been rejected by the school, and their difficulties in finding a place for themselves in a large educational setting have been acknowledged. As a result of the meetings we generally find they are more willing to take responsibility for their behaviour and to begin to engage seriously in finding a solution, whether it be work, or study or both. If they return to school, their experiences in the work place (usually good ones) have enhanced their self esteem and their sense that they can make it in the outside world. Many of them acknowledge the good side of work - making money and being treated like and adult, but found the long ours and loneliness big issues.

Parents have been uniformly surprised by the transformation of their grumpy, angry adolescents into young men they could enjoy, at least sometimes. "It was as if a weight was removed from his shoulders."

Lessons We Have Learned

Bringing as broad a range of strategies to difficult issues in schools involves time, energy and skilled personnel. Sometimes that is impossible. But the alternative costs to the community when young men are allowed to drift or be pushed out of school with a strong sense of rejection, are high. Anger against school can come out in a range of ways. Graffiti attacks on buildings and scratches on staff cars can be repaired but a lifelong hatred of schooling can have enormous implications for society as well as the individual. If the boys leave with a sense that it was their decision, but the door to learning is still open to them, then maybe they will return. For survival in the 21st century they will need to.

Exit plans are a useful strategy for a small group of students. But they should be part of a context - a well resourced, well planned supportive student management structure and a clearly articulated set of principles governing relationship with students and parents, which are based on mutual respect.

Bringing as broad a range of strategies to difficult issues in schools involves time, energy and skilled personnel. Sometimes that is impossible

"They're both my dad"

Father - Child Camps in East Gippsland

Rollo Browne talks to Peter Carr, Principal, St Mary's Primary School, Bairnsdale Victoria

It does involve new families and once someone comes they generally return the next year

Tell us a bit about your school.
We are a small Catholic primary school in Bairnsdale, a country town in east Gippsland, Victoria. We have 365 children, mostly Anglo and Italian Australian and with a small Koori group at the school. Of 18 staff there are only 2 men, which is one of the reasons we want to see fathers involved in the school.

How did the dads camps come about?
Well I inherited the program when I arrived 7 years ago. From what I understand there was a group of dads who were keen campers. They were part of our Parents Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) whose job is fun- and fund-raising. I believe the original idea was a Father and Son camp but the then president had 5 daughters. He led the push to broaden it.

What happens?
Essentially there are two big family events on our calendar. The Family Camp on the last weekend in February held at Waterford near Dargo. It's a campground in semi-bush, beside a river. People arrive on Friday night and the only organized thing is a singalong on Saturday night and a Family Mass on Sunday. This year they had a kids disco. A couple of teachers do go, but it's organized by the PTFA and myself as principal. There were about 180 people, some 25% of our families. I do promote it quite a bit. It does involve new families and once someone comes they generally return the next year.

The Father and Child Camp is held on the first weekend in December at Cape Conran, near Marlo. It is a DCNR site (Dept Conservation & Natural Resources) near the beach with pit toilets and cold showers. It's a bit rougher than Waterford which has an amenities block. Seven years ago about 60 people came. Last year we had 160, with about 60 men, including one of the Koori dads. I push the camp hard at enrolment times, through the newsletters, and some classes get fired up about it.

Both these camps are basically community building events with the Fathers Camp being more important because we recognize that many dads don't get to spend time alone with their children.

How is this camp different?
Well there is even less structure and no organized games. We do have a Family Mass on a Saturday night. It's short. The children sit on their dad's knees and we ask the children to say what the best thing for them about being with their fathers. Then we ask the men to say something to their children. This is very moving and special.

Sometimes someone comes to me, say if some kids are playing too close to a fire. My response is that I am there as a dad and, if they are concerned, the first step is to talk to their dad. The golden (unstated) rules are: If a kid walks in at mealtime, feed them. If they are out in the hot sun, sunscreen them.

What are the effects of the camp?
Firstly, the most obvious thing is that the children are proud of being with their dads. Second, the fathers become visible to their friends, especially for those whose work takes them away a lot. The children go and find their friends first and then they introduce them, "This is my dad." We even have some separated dads who come up from Melbourne to spend time with their children. They mark it off on their calendar each year. Some men and their children even come after their kids have left the school. Just to catch up with kids' friends and other dads.

It's difficult to gauge the long term effect of bringing kids and their dads together but the looks on the kids faces and the tenderness on the men's faces tells me something. The mums support it and comment on the dads continuing interest in the kids school life.

The fathers get into the role of looking after their kids, meals, bedtime etc. For some dads it's permission to be feminine, do the caring and show that side of themselves. It's not macho as in 'who can light the biggest fire' or 'go trekking the furthest'. It's not even cool to be macho. It's about modeling another way to be a father and normalizes men's involvement in school life. Men who don't have much to do with the school community wouldn't otherwise be involved with us.

The dads get together after the kids have gone to bed. It's a real social event. They talk about their kids and are pleased to get the time away.

For them it's an adventure, it's a bit different as there are no women there. The mums pack enough food for a week. Some even use the opportunity to organize their own social event. One group went shopping in Melbourne. I also hear that the local sporting competitions organize byes for Bairnsdale teams on this weekend so it doesn't clash with the camp.

What about children with no fathers?

One year we started the idea of adopt-a-child. If your dad was no longer around, was away or couldn't come then another family could bring you. We'd have 3 or 4 children a year like that. Mostly there is a culture of awareness amongst the children about this.

On one camp I noticed a student with two adults there and I went over and said, "Well, one of these men must be your dad." "They're both are", came the reply. The step father and the birth father had in the past wanted to knock each other's block off, but now were both there co-operating as dads.

What would you change?

I don't want to see changes. We may have a Dads and Sons games night or special meal but the camp is part of the school culture. It's powerful in its simplicity.

I'd recommend it to other schools, even in the city. One of the critical things is a good venue. Also if I were starting from scratch, I'd use the personal approach. Bring about 6 dads in and ask them to personally contact other families to get it going. The cost is low. About $2.50 per head, per night at the Fathers Camp and $4 at the Family Camp.

Peter Carr is happy to share his enthusiasm on 03 5152 3706.

(Photograph by Chris Patterson)

KIDS NEED DADS WHO

take an interest

FatherCare Posters are an initiative of the Men and Boys Project of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle. They were designed by Graphic Design students at the Hunter Institute of Technology in conjunction with the Men and Boys Project team. The title "Kids Need Dads Who..." is taken with permission from a Burnside pamphlet of the same name. Contact the Men and Boys Project at Phone: 02 4921 8739 Fax: 02 4921 6934.

The University of Newcastle

(See order form on back page)

The Classroom Treaty - changing school culture

Freemans Bay School, Auckland, New Zealand

The children and I worked on formulating the treaty in the classroom together, then the treaty was signed by each of us and that became the basis of our classroom practice

Donal Maclean conducted an action research project as part of the "Meeting The Needs Of Boys In Schools" course at Manukau Institute of Technology, Auckland. He talked about his work with Bill Hagan, Lecturer at Manukau Institute of Technology.

Could you say a bit about the school you work at and the children you teach?
Freemans Bay School is a primary school in the centre of Auckland. We have a range of ethnic groups, with 400 children on the roll. We have a Maori Immersion Unit as part of the school (100 children). The school has classrooms that are open-plan, with variable spaces. I teach in the senior area of the school, standard 3 and 4. In my classroom last year I had 27 children, evenly divided between boys and girls. When I began the previous year I also had 27 children, but then I had 21 boys.

What was the project you began the previous year and how did it develop?
The central part of the project with the boys was moving more towards a treaty based classroom. A treaty based classroom is most simply a class of children that have constructed a document together (the Treaty). This document forms the basis for all interactions in the classroom. So discipline systems, interpersonal interactions (teacher-child,child-child)classroom programs and behaviour outside the classroom are affected by processes that derive from work done in and around the treaty. The children and I worked on formulating the treaty in the classroom together, then the treaty was signed by each of us and that became the basis of our classroom practice.

Towards the middle of the year I began to realise that it was a document that I wasn't using as much as I could. So I began using it in everyday classroom communications. I found very quickly I had to change the way I related to the children and the process I used for problem solving and conflict management in the classroom.

How did you set the scene then in developing communication skills, talking about it and perhaps role modelling it for the boys in your class?
We began the year with the process I've just described. I do encourage the children in their co-operative behaviour all the time, but at the beginning of the year the scene is set by making what I call a "Cooperative Fine Mat" an artwork which the children put together as part of the class. As part of this they create their own graphic strip about themselves and then weave that into a sort of fine mat that is then kept in the classroom for the whole year. When they actually do the weaving they say a little ritual, a spell almost, over the weaving which is just about reinforcing what co-operativeness is about for the whole year.

So in terms of setting the scene for the treaty and to improve the communication of the children we did some small role plays at the beginning of the year. As situations arose we continued to use that means for teaching and learning about how we might deal with these situations.

Whenever I talk to the children or whenever we are talking about the treaty we always sit in a circle so that everyone is looking at each other with minimum distraction from those who can't be involved. I have attempted to give them formal ways of addressing situations that come up for them. So it might be the "I feel..., when..." statement and "What I want to happen is...". In giving that to the children to use I have to be able to use that form too.

How did the boys respond to it? Was it different with less boys in the classroom this past year?
What I learnt most in the process of using the treaty as the basis for classroom behaviour and not just as a token gesture was that I had to change the way that I processed situations. Previously I would look at a situation and process it in my head and come out with the solution. What I found I needed to do, and this was more helpful in a situation in a classroom with more boys, was that I actually had to process outside my head and thereby bring the children into the process. That also modelled for them what that process might involve. I did notice, more so last year, that there was a change in the way that the children interacted. Because I had a majority of boys I noticed that the boys interaction was changed, the changes weren't huge but certainly towards where I was headed in terms of the treaty.

I actually had to process outside my head and thereby bring the children into the process

Did they use some of your language or your ways of sorting out conflict?
Yes. I heard the framing of the statements being used more often, more so last year when I was more conscious of getting it underway. Alongside having a treaty in the classroom as the basis for our communication, I also had to make adjustments in the way I disciplined the children when they were out of line and with the way the classroom worked.

Steve Biddulph in one of his parent books has an approach called 'stand and deal'. I changed it slightly and called it 'think and deal'. I produced a standard form which a child will use when they are mucking around in the classroom in the big or small group. They take the form outside the classroom, on my say-so, and answer 4 standard questions: What were you doing?, What were you feeling or needing? What can you do differently next time? What are you going to do next time?

They get a chance to think about what they've done and how they can change their behaviour and that's been good because I can then bring it into a later discussion. It is largely boys who end up using that system. It gets them to identify their needs, and to identify what they might do to change their behaviour and still get their needs met. In particular it has been working very well with one boy, previously described as ADD. It has been a consistent approach over a very long period and he has responded very well to it.

So they know what will happen next, then it does happen. It provides some security and I suppose some safety too, because they know what to expect from you.
Yes. There is also the fact that they fill out their form and come back to the classroom. They have had some time away and come back into the classroom a bit calmer. They leave the form in the place set aside for it and I address it with them on a 1:1 basis when there is time to do it. They don't come back and interrupt what we are doing. They come back and join the group again and we address it later. That means that they are given the opportunity to reflect in a positive way that reinforces the desired behaviour. It has worked very well.

How does this approach that you have found works in your own classroom transferred to other parts of the school, other classes, school environment?

The Deputy Principal is very keen on working with treaties. Each class, the teacher and the children together, are expected to get a treaty written out and signed by all the kids. They have the treaty displayed in their classroom. So each classroom has written a treaty for the year and the school has reinforced that by a drawing up a school treaty that's signed by all the children. The school itself has a policy called "Tiaki Pai" which means good health, in the sense of well being. Tiaki Pai is written on a publicly displayed document that has been signed by all the children. The approach the Deputy Principal takes to ensure that all the children in each classroom discuss it, is to meet with each class for 20 minutes at the beginning of the year. Hopefully our discipline system can work from there but it is not perfect. Next year we expect to do a lot more work in terms of the treaty actually being the basis for interaction of the classroom.

In my own class situation, as in the Deputy Principal's, the treaties are being used all the time as a basis for our work. It forms the basis for teaching the kids about responsibility for their own actions and giving them the tools to be responsible and to handle similar situations in the future.

So have you noticed how your interaction with some of the other boys have changed. Some of the younger ones or some of the ones in your teaching area that might be coming to you next year? How does that affect your interaction with them?

Because this treaty is about my ways of interacting with them I have to be working from it all the time. Last year when I began this I had to be very conscious of making changes. This year I have been less conscious of it but I think it's because I've made some of those changes personally. So I am now developing communication, relationships and training in relationships all the time where before I had to be stopping myself, thinking about what I was doing and trying to reframe it. Because I am the only male teacher at the school among 15 or 16 teachers, I don't really have other male teachers to compare with. I do notice that older boys like to interact with me. I hope that I am modelling positive patterns of interaction with them and others and that this is having a positive effect on the younger boys but I can't say for certain.

I would just like to mention what has come out of the treaty in relation to a couple of boys in my class. Part of the treaty in my classroom is about hospitality and including other people in it. Our treaty is not just about interactions in the classroom space but also out in the playground.

For example, when a child with a very bad reputation was due to come into our class I discussed it with the children first of all. We talked about how that child might feel, what difficulties that child faces with the culture that had begun to grow around him, about expecting him to be bad and how we might change that. I suggested to them that before he even came to classroom if he was receiving messages in the playground like, "Hey I hear you are coming into our classroom and it's going to be great", then he would come in with quite a different attitude than if they went out of the classroom today and as soon as they saw him, thought "Oh no! He's not coming into our classroom. No way, god!".

That actually hit home because a couple of the children, boys, went out that day and actually made contact with that boy and in positive ways let him know that he was expected in the classroom and welcome. I got feedback the next day from his mother and from the boy himself saying that these kids had contacted him and he was looking forward to it too. It was a good basis on which to begin a relationship where a whole lot of retraining had to go on.

I have thought to do that with children coming up from lower classes to my class for next year as well. So it's about changing the culture around the child, I think that once you have done that then the other kids in the classroom will interact positively. If my frame of mind concerning that child is positive then the other teachers are affected too. If we begin to create a positive culture around the child then not only can we change the school experience for that child but begin to change the culture of the school.

Bill Hagan will be presenting at the Working with BOYS Building fine MEN Conference at The University of Newcastle in July.

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Team building exercise

Team work in the wild -or on the oval

By Philip Altmann, Surrey Downs School.

As part of a boys' strategy at Surrey Downs School, Phillip Altmann took 20 Year 7 boys on an outdoor adventure.

Before the day began I did some planning, including arranging a Police Community Liaison Officer to speak to the boys about the law and career issues. They had some input into this at the planning session held before the day by faxing some questions they wanted answered. At the planning session they were placed in groups at random. There were a few quiet complaints but they finally realised that this was going to be the way it would be.

It was like watching a deck of cards being reshuffled, with not necessarily the loudest and the most out spoken being the most successful

After the five groups were in place they had to select a leader. The conversation was intense but only one group was unable to agree so it was done by myself to save time rather than follow the process to the letter. They then had ten minutes to choose their group cooking task and to negotiate who was going to bring what on the day. This was a replica of the Adelaide Market, jostling for positions 'I can bring this ... What are you going to bring? .... Who's going to bring ?' The bargaining was intense and serious. Eventually each group had negotiated their part in the scheme of things with leaders having to report back to me any problems they had encountered.

I organized a couple of team building collaborative games for each group to reinforce the idea of co-operation and teamwork. One involved the staking two fence droppers in the ground of approximately one metre apart with elastic zig zagging between each stake to create openings of difference sizes.

Instructions were given about how they might achieve their objective of passing through the spider web without any part of their body or clothing touching any part of the apparatus. During the day each group participated in the activities. A variety of responses were evident from trying to jump through the spider web to attempting to work out through a team effort. The mood of each group changed as the complexity of the task became apparent. Team decisions were made and didn't work, individuals attempted to tell other group members how to do it, bodies were unceremoniously put on the ground, individuals cried foul, boys stood back and watched while others took the lead and so on. At the conclusion of the team building skills each group had taken part in each of the activities with varying degrees of success. It was like watching a deck of cards being reshuffled, with not necessarily the loudest and the most out spoken being the most successful.

The other skills activity involved the boys building a bridge across an area, with only enough pieces of timber to complete a section at a time. A point was deducted each time a foot or a wrong part of the bridge touched the swamp of crocodiles that lay below. A practise time of twenty minutes was allocated during the day on a self management basis for groups to develop strategies and to resolve any conflicts.

In the afternoon Senior Sergeant Bob Fisher answered questions such as 'Have you ever shot anyone? What do you need to do to be a police officer?, Can we have a look at your gun? What do you do with drugs?' There was some surprise on the boys' faces when they were informed that possession of the smallest amount of marijuana is illegal and a fineable offence. Throughout the day we had the assistance of a parent helper (who stayed a lot longer than intended) and the groundsperson for setting up the cooking area and packing up.

Team building exercise

"I learnt you can do anything if you work together and think about it..."

From my perspective as a teacher the day was very successful and the planning was worthwhile. The level of co-operation between the boys was very high. It had all the ingredients of excitement, adventure, risk, task-solving and fun. There was even elements of true group dynamics with conflict, chaos, emptiness and forgiveness by group members.

WHAT THE BOYS SAID.

Simon: The thing I found challenging was the Web. I enjoyed cooking on the fire and its been great.

Michael W: The thing I liked most about the cook out was the cooking. The thing I found most challenging was eating our mash. I thought the day was GREAT!

Ty: The thing I learnt today was how to cook damper and my whole day was GREAT. Thank you Mrs Barnes and Mr Altmann.

Dale: I learnt you can do anything if you work together and think about it. It was heaps of fun and I learnt to change your plan if it does not work.

Colin: Today I tried to cook pancakes but it went wrong and looked like damper. I also played soccer. I had heaps of fun.

Michael H: The thing I found challenging today was the web and building bridges. Overall the day has been great.

Luke: The main thing that I've learnt and improved is working as a team and not to try to cook in a pan without any oil!

David: The thing I liked the most today was "getting beaten up" by the police officer.

Andrew: I really enjoyed cooking my own food and helping with the fire.

Michael G: Today I learnt how to make damper and I enjoyed playing soccer with Corey and Josh. The whole day was great fun.

Nick: I learnt how to cook chops and sausages. It was good to hear what the policemen said.

Joshua: I leant how to make damper and to do fun activities and tasting different sorts of foods.

Adam: I think I found challenging was the web. I enjoyed cooking steak and chips. I enjoyed learning how to be a Police Officer and playing football as well as other activities. Corey The thing I learnt today is how to make damper and cooperate with other people and I played soccer with Josh and Gibbo.

Rickie: I thought it was good having a fire and doing group skills and it was a real fun day.

Ben R: I thing it was cool. It was a great experience for me! The food was great and it was fun! Thanks Mr Altmann and Mrs Barnes.

Ben N: I think it was cool that we got out of work. We should have more cook outs.

Shaun: The thing I liked the most was that we got out of work. I think we should have cookouts once a week.

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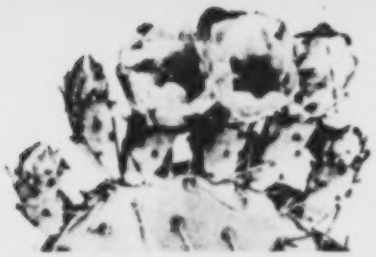

Working with **Boys**
Building Fine **Men**

Working with Boys Building Fine Men

The University of Newcastle, 1 - 3 July 1999

Sponsored by the Men and Boys Program of The Family Action Centre

International Presenters:

Trefor Lloyd

Trefor Lloyd has been involved in developing work with young men for over 16 years. He co-founded The B Team in 1985 to produce useful resources and publications for those working with young men, and to provide training and consultancy. He has written and spoken in Britain and abroad on issues affecting men, especially the practical engagement of young men.

His publications include: 'Work With Boys' (1985), 'Working With Men Who Batter their Partners' (with John Lees, 1993), 'Young Men's Health - A Youthwork Concern' (1996), 'What Next for Men?' (with Tristan Wood, 1996), A Review of Men's Health Literature for the Royal College of Nursing's Men's Health Forum and "Let's Get Changed Lad's" Developing Work With Boys and Young Men (1997).

He is currently developing school-based materials for young men on fatherhood; a suicide prevention strategy for young men's use of emergency services; researching young men's view of 'gendered work'; 3 and 4 year-olds view of 'what a man is', editing a book for Bailliere Tindall titled 'Promoting Men's Health: A Practitioners Guide'; compiling a directory of resources on 'Men's Health' for the health Education Authority (both with Neil Davidson); and researching young men's experience of the workplace and particularly 'gendered work'.

Working With Men and the B Team :

Offer a training programme, with regular courses on 'Boys Underachievement', 'Developing Boyswork', 'Masculinity and Offending', and 'Working With Young Black Men'. In addition tailor-made courses are provided for a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations.

Working with **Boys** Building Fine **Men**

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taken from everyday experience and ranging from bullying and group-aggression against individuals to (sexual) approaches to girls and a rape-scene

Freerk Ykema

Freerk Ykema is a Physical Education teacher at Schagen in the north of The Netherlands. His school, Openbare Scholengemeenschap Schagen, is a complex of different schools (school types) combined in one organisation. All together approximately 2500 pupils, spread over different locations. In 1995, he trialed the draft *Self Defence and the Prevention of Violence For Boys* course with five classes of boys at his high school. Now, as well as teaching the boys in his school he trains other Physical Education teachers to deliver the course.

Self-defence and the Prevention of Violence for Boys

The basic course intended for boys 15 years and over consists of eight lessons of 100 minutes. Each lesson begins with a warm up and finishes with a fitness test. The programme is supported by a range of specially made video-clips, containing small scenes taken from everyday experience and ranging from bullying and group-aggression against individuals to (sexual) approaches to girls and a rape-scene.

Some presentations at the conference that will be of interest to teachers:

CHANGING BOYS' SCHOOLS, CHANGING BOYS.
Tackling an entrenched 'hard' culture, widening the school focus away from competitive sports, building a respect for learning and eachother are not easy tasks. But they can be done. Three schools present their success stories.

I LOVE READING!
Getting primary boys reading. A practical approach to convincing boys that reading is not just possible but enjoyable.

GETTING DADS INVOLVED
Recruiting dads to be engaged with the boys' (and girls') learning in the school is described in these case studies from primary and secondary schools.

LITERACY VOLUNTEERS
Both peer models, using older boys, and community models, using older adults to assist with literacy, will be presented.

THE SURE-FOOTED SPORTING MODEL PROGRAM
The Victorian program using well known sportsmen to offer positive role models to boys at risk.

ON BECOMING A MENTOR
Mentoring strategies to assist student welfare teachers, year advisors and community co-ordinators.

ENGAGING YOUNG MEN IN PERFORMING ARTS
Experienced dancers & choreographers from Tap Dogs and Starstruck share their stories about involving boys in dance.

BOYS' CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY
Community-based learning can increase the participation of boys in volunteering, improve self-esteem and problem-solving skills.

BUILDING STRENGTHS
A program to better assist boys who need to make long term changes to their behaviour in school. Includes a male mentor & weekly group session to develop communication & relationship skills.

For a full program phone (02) 4984 2554, Fax (02) 4984 2755, E-mail fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au or download a registration form from http://www.newcastle.edu.au/news/conferences.html

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...men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern

The Men and Boys Project

THE PROJECT IS BASED IN THE **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Project was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The three programs which make up the Men and Boys Project are:

BOYSWORK - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education

Boys' behaviours and attitudes are increasingly being regarded as serious problems in our community. Boys low level of literacy and poor academic achievement are being raised alondside traditional concerns with aggression and risk taking. A key factor in all of these areas is boys' strongly held notion of how "to be a man". Boyswork refers to the newly developing ways of dealing with boys, individually and in groups, which recognises the importance of male identity. It includes skills and knowledge about boys and men.

THE FATHERCARE INITIATIVE - encouraging positive father involvement in communities

FatherCare promotes a positive social role for all adult males. Father Care recognises that a new style of fathering is needed, one based on the needs of children for mutually respectful relationships with men. This initiative stresses men's social role in the community (through volunteering for example) as well as in the family.

IMPROVING MEN'S HEALTH - research and teaching for better health

Includes the full spectrum of health from illness and disease to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Much of the research and health service delivery focussed on men has been based on a narrow disease model of health. This approach, as seen by men's poor health outcomes, is now judges to be inadequate. A more social model, incorporating men's identity, is being developed for a range of issues from prostate cancer and road traffic to depression and nutrition.

Seminars

Since its inception in January 1996, the Men & Boys Project has provided seminars for education, health, welfare and social service to professionals in all states of Australia. Parent meetings and demonstration sessions with boys have been held in remote rural as well as inner city locations.

Research

Research has been completed on men's health priorities, boy's needs, father's approaches to teaching driving, and men's behaviours in pharmacies. Action Research into the schools approaches of engaging boys in learning, and to teaching fathering issues is underway.

Publications

A range of publications on boys' education, fathering and men's health have been produced and are widely used in human services.

The project is managed by Richard Fletcher.

For further information please contact: The Men and Boys Program
Ph: 02 49 21 8739 Fax: 02 49 216934 Email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au

Working with **Boys** Building Fine **Men**

1-3 July, 1999

The University of Newcastle

Sponsored by The Men and Boys Program, The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle

The Family Action Centre at The University of Newcastle

The UNIVERSITY *of* NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

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Participants were very enthusiastic about the learning offered and the chance to meet others involved in promoting a better approach to boys and young men

Men and Boys Program Update

National Training Program

WORKING WITH BOYS AND YOUNG MEN

During 1998 two Working with Boys and Young Men training programs were offered in Newcastle. The three day program included practical, hands-on training in group work with boys and workshops on Classroom Management, Using Boys' Stories, Indigenous Boys and Boys and Depression. Participants were very enthusiastic about the learning offered and the chance to meet others involved in promoting a better approach to boys and young men (participants have come from every state and territory in Australia). About 50% of participants have come from schools - both primary and secondary classroom teachers, counsellors, and executive staff. Other services represented have included Juvenile Justice, Lifeline, Youth Services, Community Health, Police and Indigenous Services. The training program has been offered to women and men. Approximately 75% of participants have been male.

For 1999 the program will be offered in Newcastle, but also in Logan City (QLD) Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland (New Zealand).

In Auckland the program targeting schools and youth workers is being conducted in April by Manukau Institute of Technology in association with The Men and Boys Program. Contact Robyn Rummins on (NZ) 09 2746009.

In Logan City the Youth and Family Service (Logan City) is hosting a two day seminar on June. This program will have a Youth Work focus. Contact Mathew Ford on 07 32088199.

The Sydney and Melbourne programs are being arranged for later in the year. Details will be circulated to schools in each state.

The Newcastle program is being included into the Working with BOYS, Building fine MEN Conference in July. As well as the popular sessions from previous programs, the Conference will be bringing to Australia two presenters with many years experience working with boys and young men. Trefor Lloyd is recognised throughout Europe as an expert on the practice of work with young men. For teachers, especially those connected with sports and physical education, Freerk Ykema will provide a useful introduction to the remarkable Dutch program Physical Defence for Boys. "Looking after yourself" is as basic to boys behaviour in the Netherlands as it is to boys here in Australia. (A more detailed description is given on the Conference notice in this Bulletin)

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Boys in Schools - Resources for Teachers

Order Form

Invoices can not be sent for less than $100.00.

Make cheques payable to: Men & Boys Program

Send: Family Action Centre, Men & Boys Program
The University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308

Title	Pub. No	Price	Qty	Total
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (4 issues)	970	$35.00		
Being a Man Photopak	979	$125.00		
Boys in Schools	961	$24.95		
Getting Dads Involved in Schools	978	$14.50		
Improving Boys' Education (a manual for schools)	973	$40.00		
Man's World: A Game for Young Men A B-Team Production	974UK	$110.00		
Boyz Rulez Posters	981	$28.00		
FatherCare Posters	983	$48.50		
Lets Get Changed Lads	982UK	$34.50		

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Men and Boys Program • Family Action Centre
The University of Newcastle

Vol. 2 • No. 2 • 1999

The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN • Practical Ini[illegible]ressing Boys' Needs

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Editorial

As this issue goes to press the Medical Journal of Australia is preparing to publish a review of suicide trends in Australia from 1964 to 1997. The review found that over this time the suicide rate of males 15-24 years more than doubled. For females, there has been a corresponding slight increase, but from much smaller numbers. In 1997, for this age group, there were 417 male and 93 female deaths. Improving the early diagnosis and treatment of depression in this age group is widely accepted as an important factor in reducing the numbers of suicides among young people. However "feeling sad" and "being depressed" are not gender neutral terms. For boys, admitting to, or even noticing, their own feelings of sadness may not be comfortable. For teachers and school counsellors, identifying depression among boys may be equally awkward. In this bulletin we present some important insights from the Mood Disorders Program working with boys who are depressed. The notion that boys express depression differently, will be particularly relevant to classroom teachers and school counsellors who are in the front line of work with boys at risk.

Although completed suicides are relatively rare events, many teachers and students have personal experience of the impact of this type of tragedy. Education authorities and health departments have had to develop protocols to ensure that the trauma following a suicide connected with the school population is effectively dealt with. The account of a rural primary school which became the site for one young man's suicide, suggests some appropriate strategies to address the feelings of despair and anger left behind when someone connected with the school suicides.

At the other end of the spectrum of intervention, prevention of learning difficulties and behaviour problems is a standard part of the schools' work with boys. However, it is clear to many teachers that the problems manifesting as boys' disruption or disaffection in the classroom have their origins outside of the school. The possible benefits of community volunteers in assisting schools to meet boys' needs, to improve the learning outcomes for the boys, and to reduce teacher stress have not been well understood. The Homelink program, which operates in the Newcastle area, is one example of how a community-based program can support the work of the school. Deb Hartman, who has joined the Man and Boys Program to particularly address the primary area of boys' schooling, interviews a young boy and "his volunteer", the boys' mother, his teacher, the principal and the program co-ordinator. Their stories illustrate how a male volunteer can play an important educational role in support of the school.

It should not be inferred from the emphasis on the male volunteer that only men can assist boys in their learning. Cheryl Hallinan demonstrates through her approach to boys in rural NSW, that a female principal can play an effective role in improving boys' education. This topic was also discussed at the Leadership in Boys' Education Conference held in Newcastle earlier this year. As well as a brief conference report, we are including the summary of discussion by the female principals and deputy principals (89 of them) who attended the conference. Their workshop identified some important features of women's leadership with boys.

Robert Salt, an Aboriginal Mental Health worker also supports schools in their work with boys and has developed an Aboriginal Identity Program suitable for boys in schools. He suggests some strategies for non-Aboriginal educators to use in their work with boys. Finally we include an example of an innovative program developed to meet the needs of boys. In Noarlunga, SA, the FAME mobile school has adapted its curriculum and teaching to better suit those who refuse normal school settings.

Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne

The cover photo is from the FAME mobile school. See story on page 11

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Guidelines for Contributors

The BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content is meant to motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

Say a bit about your school What was the initiative and who was it aimed at? What happened? What lessons did you learn? What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at a previous issue of the Bulletin. Or contact us and talk about it.

Richard Fletcher 02 49216401 email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au Rollo Browne 02 95558424 email: rollo@loom.com.au

Identifying Depression in Boys

Richard Fletcher talks to Anthony Critchley, Coordinator of the Mood Disorders Program at the Community Adolescent Mental Health Team, Newcastle, NSW.

Why was the program set up?

We were set up through special Burdekin funding as it was recognised that depression is a major health problem in young people. By 2010, the WHO has predicted that depression will be a significant component of the global disease burden, overtaking cardio vascular disease. So the idea is to get in early and work with young people. If we do, there is a good chance that we will be able to reduce the impact it has on a young person's life.

Do you see many boys?

It has been really interesting. When we were setting up the clinic, the biggest thing that people were worried about was that I was a male psychologist and that I would be seeing female clients. But since starting the project in 1997, about 70% of those attending have been males. These males are referred to us by other people that have noticed that something is not quite right with them, so we are guessing that male depression is more prevalent than has been thought.

What would they have been referred for?

Often for substance abuse, or, not attending school, conflict at home or dropping out of sporting activities. Often parents get a sense that their son is 'just not their son anymore'. Doctors will say that they have a substance abuse problem, are not sleeping, not eating, or that there is significant family conflict. By family conflict we mean having a lot more arguments with family members, withdrawing, and perhaps staying out a lot. Previously many of these symptoms have initially been labelled as conduct problems.

We probably get about 50% of our referrals from youth workers or school counsellors and 50% from General Practitioners. We expect that ratio to change as we train school counsellors to detect and treat depression. Initial results suggest that school counsellors are feeling more comfortable about recognising depression or at least contacting us on the phone as consultants.

What do you make of the high percentage of boys in your program?

Well it is a surprise because the rate in the community is completely opposite - females get depressed twice as often as men (although we know that young men are very vulnerable to suicide) I think that once we start looking at the ways young people come into our clinic, particularly the ways young males behave with depression, it doesn't always match the criteria written in our mental health manuals. With boys we have to ask what is driving their behaviour.

Often parents get a sense that their son is 'just not their son anymore'.

What is the traditional picture of depression?

I guess clinical depression is the big one. The symptoms must be consistent over two weeks, and include: low mood, marked decrease in pleasurable activities, sleep disturbances and appetite disturbance, agitation and inability to think or concentrate. Boys either over sleep or under sleep and irritability is more pronounced in them. The feelings of hopelessness and helplessness also come through clearly in young men who do not understand why they feel this way and why they are always getting into trouble.

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At the level of clinical depression (estimated at between 0.4% and 3.4% of all depression) there are not that many differences between males and females. At the other end of the range of depression, what we see is persistent feelings of sadness and unhappiness: basically getting upset and crying some of the time. We expect to see a lot of these behaviours in mild depression, but they are not ones that boys typically show. What we see in the boys is irritability. It suggests that young males may be trying to cope by taking substances, punching, fighting or withdrawing beyond what we would expect from a teenager. Boys may stay well out of family life, locking themselves in their room for hours and hours at a time, totally cutting themselves off. The picture is that the boys are having these other symptoms apart from sadness, which we didn't recognise or ask about, and that these may have been covering depression.

Are you saying that boys who get into trouble are really depressed?

No. We do not want to excuse or pathologise 'bad' or violent behaviour. But we are recognising that, particularly for depressed boys, the sadness underlies poor conduct but we just haven't had a language to ask boys about it. I think that this is the main turning point: how do we find a language that can ask boys "Well, are you doing all this stuff because you are angry or is it because you are feeling sad?". We are finding that the boys are pretty sad.

Typically, boys have come under the label of 'conduct problems'. Boys typically presented with fighting, withdrawing, truancy and/or substance abuse. They were labelled conduct problems and the typical treatments were punishments: detentions, suspensions, or legal interventions if that was required. All of these are withdrawing the young man from supports, and isolating them further when what the boys may have been saying was 'I am feeling isolated I need to find some way of being connected'.

When thinking about conduct problems, most programs will say that you have missed the boat by the time someone is a teenager. Intervention should have occurred in the preschool years. So if kids get misdiagnosed as conduct disorder when they are teenagers then two things happen. First, most services will say that they can't work with them, citing the early intervention literature. Second, if services are provided, they are usually controlling or containing. For someone who is depressed, a punitive or restrictive model of intervention just isn't going to work, it is going to exacerbate their symptoms.

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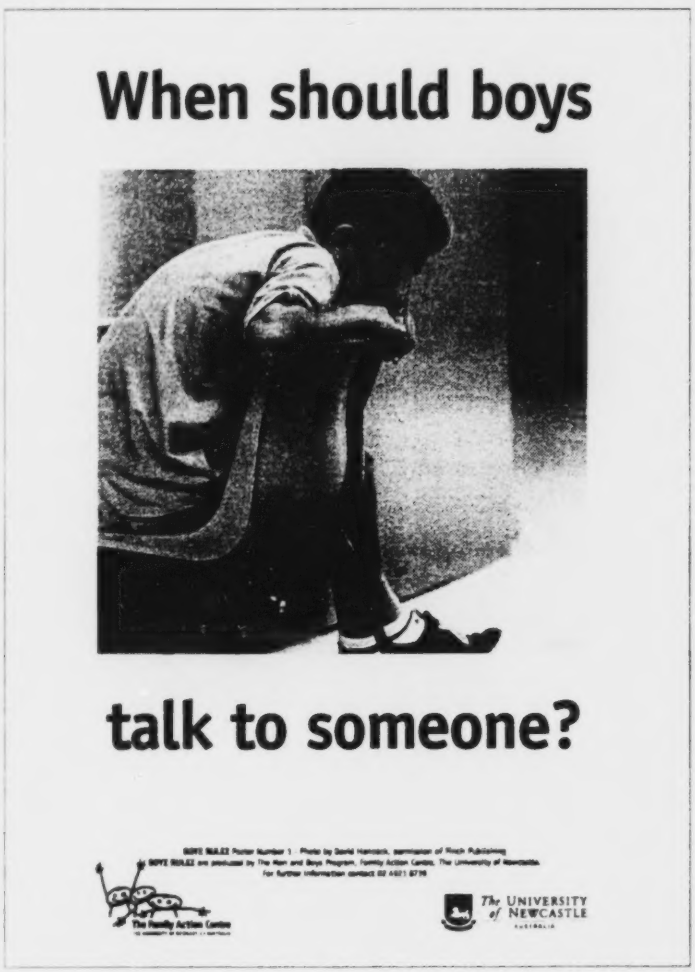

When young people are diagnosed with depression, they will be accepted into counselling or they will get considerations for their school work and sometimes support teachers are brought in. Depression seems to collect a whole range of different, warmer interventions, which conduct disorders just don't get. You are more likely to spend time with a depressed person than you are with someone who has been labelled as conduct disordered. So how do you get boys to come in? I think parental worry brings a lot of the kids into our centre. There has been a lot of work done by school counsellors recommending our service and young men like our service being separate from their schools, this is one of the big things that gets them in.

When they get here, we have a lot of work to do to keep them here. That is one of the big things about boys in particular. For me, it is a real struggle to know when do you actually start the counselling with boys. It is a real sense of getting to know them first. You have got to be interested in them as a person, and you have really got to set the scene in a relaxed and informal manner. What a lot I am looking for is not analysis of their past behaviour or what has got them to us, but their understanding of what's happening for them.

Do the boys go onto medication?

Not as the first priority. The first line of treatment that everyone recommends is cognitive behaviour therapy which is basically a technique that gets young people to recognise body cues (feeling stressed or uptight, tense, fearful, etc.) and getting them to recognise what is going through their mind at that time. We are encouraging them to notice what they are saying to themselves when they feel stressed or down and then working towards changing that message. The boys will often tell themselves: I'll never do any good, I'm hopeless, I always fail, she'll never love me. All of those are typical young people self statements (and often adults self statements as well). We look at changing those thought patterns and also changing the behaviour that follows. So if you think that life is no good or that you'll never pass, you might give up school. You have got to think about "Is this exam the end of the world?" and that there have been other exams where you have been okay.

Some boys do need medication, and there is controversy about prescribing medication to young kids, but clinical depression is a biological condition and so medication can be very helpful. Fewer than 20% of our clients are placed on medication. The standard treatment for medication lasts between nine and 18 months depending on severity. We need to remember that a high percentage of young men "self-medicate" taking alcohol, marijuana or other substances. In the scheme of intervention, counselling is trialed first and augmented with medication only if required. Often there is a significant decrease in interest and use of substances when young men start to feel better.

Depression affects many young people, including many boys and young men. Services dealing with young people need to be aware of how depression might be influencing the young men and how to talk to them about it or refer them to someone who can.

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THE MOOD DISORDER PROGRAM in Newcastle, researches mood disorder in adolescents, conducts training for professionals working with young people and provides a clinical service for young people and their families from the Hunter Valley.

Mood disorders covers a range of disorders such as anxiety and depression, although the services' primary target is adolescent depression. Depression includes depressed feelings through to what is termed clinical depression which has a standardised list of features diagnosed by qualified psychologists and psychiatrists. Clinical depression has a biological component and has an impact on kids' everyday functioning - it's a depression that lasts longer than two weeks and has a marked impact on their day-to-day functioning.

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Broadening Boys' Options

An edited transcript of the presentation by Cheryl Hallinan to the LEADERSHIP IN BOY'S EDUCATION NATIONAL FORUM, Newcastle - May 12-13 1999

I'm the principal at Coleambally Central School of NSW, far south west, down below Griffith in the south of the Riverina. My school is a K to 12 school and there are 350 pupils.

The reasons at our school for getting moving on boy's education are exactly the same as everyone else's and the statistics are actually the same as well. I'm in the middle class community in the bush, rice growing. All our results were on the average or better yet, when we really went into our evidence we found that we had a group of under performing, under achieving male students. Surprise, surprise they also linked up with behaviour referrals and all the normal things that everyone else has identified over the last few days.

Non completion of the School Certificate and High School Certificate was higher for us than most because we're in a situation where there are not enough workers for the jobs available. We have no unemployment in my town of 660 and my shire of 2,800. That is mainly because we have a mill, we have a large chicken processing plant and we have intensive farming that sees our farmers doing one crop straight after the next. They've just got the rice in, they're now waiting for a little bit of rain to put the wheat in and then it will be canola. So it's a three crop year, it's flat out, there's a lot of driving, there's a lot of side work keeping machinery going when it's used quite that much throughout the year.

As well as academic issues, dangerous behaviour is a major problem and rural youth suicide, as you are aware, is very high. It most likely relates to the level within the homosexual community. Those kids have no where to go, they have no role models. If they stay in their towns we are finding more and more that they are the children that get drunk, drive into trees and have terrible accidents. But whether it is an accident is another issue of course. So we have a major problem with atypical behaviours of boys not being recognised or acknowledged.

We have a huge problem with alcohol use and we are the marijuana capital of the world. Our district has the highest level or arrests for possession and sale and growing. The farms are actually at Coleambally, where I am, not in Griffith. We are aware that the Mafia remains. The names are still there, however my lips are sealed to protect me!

The boys' program basically comes down to a series of things that we're doing. The program runs through a male teacher mentoring program with identified students. We have students moving in and out of our schools, as many city schools have too. Ours come and go with the rural timetable. They come for crops, they go up to Queensland, have a bit of a holiday, they come back down. We have children moving in and out so it's really essential that we have early identification both of literacy and numeracy problems but also of emotional needs and other aspects particularly dealing with boys. We use individual education programs (IEP) for a number of our kids. We do it by means of folders. All the kids in the class have the same sort of folders with their work in it, but some kids have different work inside their folders when they're working in that subject.

We also use a tutoring program for teachers which basically means me, the principal, and the head teachers. I don't have a deputy and I've got 350 kids, that's bigger than most country high schools but that's the way of central schools. Coming in and working with kids in the classroom, my head teachers generally work a 30-35 period week by doing this tutorial system as well. But it's a way

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We think it's absolutely essential that some sort of relationship with dad is built. But that includes, in particular, the positives as well as the negatives.

ofworking with first year out teachers and inculcating them in the rights of attitudes to kids and we don't get that rudeness to children. But it really hits our head teachers and it hits myself as principal.

The involvement of father and father figures is obviously a hot potato and I know in many city schools there often isn't a father around. We find father figures for our identified kids. That can be the local Anglican priest who is an ex-chalky and is a wonder. But we also use members of staff, we use members of the school council, we use fire fighters on the bush fire brigade, they're really good, the community services blokes, we use the APEX and the Lions. We use them as father figures for our kids.

We have strategies to involve fathers. The blokes where I am from don't particularly like me ringing them and asking them to do things because I'm a sheila. So I have a really good couple of male teachers on staff, they're the ones that actually make the contact and the follow through. I have a terrific young fourth year out phys-ed guy who does a great deal of the ringing of parents. He can talk to Victor or John or whatever on a very much man-to-man basis. He does it in my office while I am there so I'm aware of what the discussion is about. Using the speaker phone I can hear what the father is saying, but he is in charge of the discussion.

Our aim this year has been to have a father or father figure at every meeting with any of our targeted kids. And that means any positive meeting and also any negative meeting, any behaviour meeting. We've succeeded with that. Sometimes the father's not physically present. Sometimes he's on the end of a bad phone out on the farm, out at Poodganook on the sheep station and we're in the office with the kid and a speaker phone. The speaker phone is a way of us saying well there is a meeting going on and the dad's here. The kids will always tell us that dad's too busy to come and mum's got to come. We're not circumventing mum and leaving her out of the loop, but a lot of our boys would much prefer us to deal with mum who will not pass that information on to their fathers. We think it's absolutely essential that some sort of relationship with dad is built. But that includes, in particular, the positives as well as the negatives.

We do joint planning of what's going to happen with the boy, how we can support him, what his needs is. We explain the special IEP to the fathers and we have them involved but not actively involved on a day to day basis because our dads work much too hard and much too long to do that. But we hope to make contact on a weekly basis with each of these dads to see how their sons are going at home. Whether it be homework, whether it be at work experience. For many of these boys homework is not applicable.

As I said the marijuana crop is a problem in our area. We don't (says she confidently), we don't have marijuana smoked at school, not from where I can see it. We tell the kids there are lots of snakes around the property which tends to keep them in a bit. We've got a five acre lot and we had a brown snake bite a student doing the cross country track. He was cutting the corner and no one else will cut a corner on a cross country track I tell you! Neither will the parents allow them because the parents didn't haven't ambulance insurance and it was a long and expensive trip to the hospital for the antivenene.

Another aspect is parental planning meetings. We have year meetings with our parents. We only have between 35-40 kids in a year group, so it's quite able to have those sort of meetings. If we put something solid on the parents will turn up, we've found now. But it does take personal phone calls and invites. So when newsletters don't work, letters don't work you've got to have a telephone tree to ring and get them in.

At a parent's suggestion, we have instituted active monitoring and evaluation by the school council, not by us, because a lot of these people don't trust schoolies,

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but they do trust the evaluation of their own. We've responded to their request in targeting crisis times in our area. Our kids spent a lot of time driving auger bins and trucks and things during harvest. At that time we altered our homework procedures. Homework dropped for that period. We acknowledge their needs but it goes back with a vengeance later. Likewise we have many holidays taken in the middle of the year. When the wheat is in a lot of our families go on holidays at that time because there is no other time. They tend to work right through the Christmas and Easter period in particular. So we target units of work prepared that we can just take off the shelf and give to those kids at that time. Education is seen by the school and community to be important and also of course the dads are there on holidays with them so while they're fishing or whatever they're doing, we're expecting dad to monitor that. It's been going okay so far.

Vocation education is an important focus. It seems really sexist. I was there in the late sixties with the feminist movement too and we've had lots of female role models into schools. But the reality is we need to get the male employees and employers in. We've just started setting up two videos to tape ex-pupils who turn up in town. Many of our successful role models leave town. If you go through school and you do well, you go to university, you don't ever return, you're gone for good. So when they come back to see us or come back for a twenty first or whatever, we have to grab the kid, video them and we can then use that in the educational setting through school. One boy I convinced to be a male model, which is a worry for a country boy, but he was a hot looking bloke. He became a male model, did drama at Wollongong University, ended up being a technician doing sound and lighting stuff. He came back to tell his physics teacher that the physics I made him do in Year 12 has been the most valuable thing he's ever learnt for his work in theatre, for working in lighting and sound. The teacher felt much better but we wanted to get that on tape because you'll never get it again.

Like everyone else we've had a huge review of resources and sequences. An active learning focus is expected in every unit of work that every high school teacher does. Explicit outcomes with student self-assessment has been in for the last year and that's been really, really good with kids doing their own self-assessment. They are very silly at first but they become quite sensible. The parents look forward to the ten weekly self-assessment that the kids do the main part of but that the teachers also comment on.

We were particularly asked to talk about leadership issues.

The first issue for me was to be responsive to the staff and student and community concerns. The real push came up through my experience of boys. I've got four boys of my own ranging in age from 33 down to nine years old. That gives me a bit of experience. But I sometimes have a group of parents who blame us for their boy's bad behaviour every time. "It's your fault. What are you doing? You can't whip em, in my day they got caned, we could do something about them." I had a hot and bothered P&C meeting and a school council meeting. A group of parents, the first time all mothers, the second time mums with their husbands dragged in. I took the initiative and said "Righto, I'm glad you're all here, thank you for coming along. Yes we've got a problem with our boys and I want you to help me. I'm going to ask you from now on every time we get a boy in I want one of you dads to get off the tractor, get out of the office, leave whatever you're doing and come in and help your boy. It's so important." The fathers were very shocked and stepped back from that but it was too good an opportunity to lose.

The changes we're making for boys are going to lead to a great difference for girls, particularly girls in rural Australia.

We've got to acknowledge and be sensitive to specific issues of gender roles. Depression is an issue amongst boys who have problems with their gender assignment and where their sexuality is taking them, and that's a group in our school. It's a very small group but a group that I am very concerned about. With one of those boys I actually managed to get him into a school in Melbourne where he can live a different sort of life than he can't live in Coleambally. I'm sure he

would not be alive if we didn't have him there. A gifted computer person with very straight laced, evangelical parents and he could not express himself in any way. He needed to get out of our small town - it was literally killing him.

We also have to be aware of the needs of the girls in town and, as many people have said in the last two days, the changes we're making for boys are going to lead to a great difference for girls, particularly girls in rural Australia. But the difference has to happen across the whole community and unlike the move for girls education that happened back in the late 70's and early eighties, that came out of a push from the general community, I think in boys' education we're really almost ahead of the community. If we're getting flack and if it is a hot potato it's because we're taking up the action on behalf of the kids who we care and love about a great deal.

There's a huge challenge presented to the harm-minimisation programs that we're putting in and that involves drug education but it also involves alcohol abuse. It means driving, it means safety, OH&S issues. We train all our kids on the OH&S program. We do back care with all of them, girls and boys. We do what we can to job ready our kids but also to make them as safe as we possibly can in a society that is very high risk taking.

Our attitudes about drinking in particular, and it is the land of the longneck home bottler where we live, is a real problem. We're really challenging a lot of very dangerous behaviour and I've got rapped over the knuckles for that in the past. Last year we had two Year 8 students carted off to hospital with alcoholic poisoning, a girl and a boy. It was at a Year 8/9 party. The parents once again got hit with huge ambulance bills. They had to be taken to Albury some three hours away. It took the one ambulance out of town for the night so the police and the ambulance were absolutely delighted with that of course! I spoke about it on assembly. Just in terms of how much we cared for the kids and that really we have some bad examples in town in our community and that young people aren't allowed to drink because they tend to drink to get drunk. And while there are some bad examples around they have to learn how to use alcohol wisely in any society and that we were really concerned for them. So binge drinking is such a danger. Out of that I had two children removed from the school, I had district superintendents, I had ministerials out of that little statement on assembly. So they are some real challenges. We're challenging some of the beliefs and long term behaviours and it's a minefield for a leader.

Lastly there's a huge perceived threat in my community from the educated male. In our community they are happy for their girls to go off to university. Our kids achieve very highly. Last year the top university entrants index was 98.45, the year before it was in the 97's. And persistently we have kids in that area. Our annual report shows it. We have some quite exceptional children, we have some wonderful teaching going on. Our classes are very small. In the high school we have two groups in most years, two classes in most years. Year 9/10 we run vertically in all their subjects including Maths, English and Science. The end result of that is that our students do well, our senior classes are about six in number. They do very, very well but they never return and that's a fear. Some of our brightest boys are pulled out at Year 10 and put on the farm. They do a real traineeship where the parents can claim part of the salary for training them but they don't go off to Murrumbidgee and do their training at the college, they don't do accredited courses that would lead to other things in the future and that's a major concern. So us pushing, completing education, trying to make it the norm to go on to Year 12 is a real issue for our parents and there isn't the employment for professionals in town. We do need a new doctor coming up, our two are getting pretty old now. So I'd be happy to train one of those up. But they really are concerned about that and they don't like to see their boys go. If we're doing a good job the kids stay at the school. If we're not they're wealthy enough to go off to private schools. They also live distant enough to be able to get a large subsidy from the government to go to Yanko, Hurlston or one of the cheaper private schools. So my numbers are real line ball as far as how well we're going.

In particular years when we've had problems, we've had two or three boys in a bad peer group be sent off to boarding school as punishment. It's a very sad thing for a parent to send a child away when they're in difficulty and one of those children suicided. So I don't want that to happen to my boys. I want them to be able to live in their community and do as well as they possibly can. But the challenges in leadership when you're really bucking a whole cultural change there and you need to take your school council, your P&C and all with you to do that.

Thank you.

"Yeah, We're Learning Something, But It's Not Someone Standing Up The Front"

Rollo Browne talks to Br Mark Sweeney, about a unique mobile school called FAME operating in the northern suburbs of Adelaide.

Community involvement: the cubby house built for an Aboriginal pre-school

What is FAME?

The FAME stands for Flexible Accredited Mobile Education. The program operates for young people aged 13 - 15 years who are not attending school and for whom the current school system does not offer much hope of attaining success. We currently have 6 young people enrolled, 3 boys and 3 girls, and several more on the waiting list. The staff consists of a male teacher and a female youth worker with some male volunteers assisting.

We have a minibus and pick up the students at designated sites, sometimes at home or preferably they meet you at a bus stop. We might go to a youth centre, anywhere there's space, a power point, and where it's warm enough. At the moment we're using the woodwork workshop run by Mission SA.

We teach basic literacy and numeracy to improve students' opportunities to re-engage schooling at Year 11 or enter TAFE or gain employment. The young people use notebook computers for recording their work rather than the usual exercise book or folder.

What is the criteria for selecting students for the program?

Homelessness, a risk of offending or already offending, and extent of time out of school. We wanted to target long term non-attenders. Kids drop out for lots of reasons. One boy we had was being bullied and just would not go back to school. The program ends for them when they turn 15 when they can go to TAFE. We have an exit kit we use with them.

We're looking to provide an alternative besides an academic classroom. There's a trend back to an academic approach in schools, even though there's a lot of work done on vocational education. Schools are saying one thing and doing the opposite because kids who do practical subjects aren't seen to be intelligent.

How does the program work?

The program operates four days a week from 9.30 am until 2.30 pm. The other day is devoted to meetings and administration duties. The early part of a normal day is spent on the literacy and numeracy components and the afternoon is directed more to a hands on approach when the students are involved in physical activities or woodwork or craft. We divide the day into 3 work sessions and at the end of each session, the young person awards him/herself a score out of 10 based on their respect of others and their participation. These scores are used to reward the young person's efforts and motivate him or her.

Most of our teaching work is 1:1 or 1:2. These boys haven't done well academically but really enjoy hands on mechanical, wood, metal work. Don't like sitting still. There's negative vibes when we talk about Maths and English so we try and disguise it, like writing thank you letters. For example, we made up some outdoor furniture which required doing a lot of measurement maths. When it was completed we gave them to people and homes in the local area. That way we link the students into the community.

We might go to a youth centre, anywhere there's space, a power point, and where it's warm enough.

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Physical activity is important

Recently, they've been doing woodwork with the Tech Studies teacher at Cardijn College. He's been seconded and is now full time at FAME. They see the fruits of their work and take home something: stained glass, the other day it was a 'grind pole' for skateboards.

What else is different about your school?

The young people have a say in the processes that occur within the program. We have a student forum at the start of the week at which the young people have the opportunity to change the program for that week. It usually lasts about 30 minutes. The students at first aren't very vocal but then as they get more confident they put their ideas in. The Forum is important as the teachers are not seen as the ones with the power and authority as is so often the case in a classroom setting. It's more of a partnership.

The last thing they want is to go back to what was hardest about school. At times they say "you're acting like a teacher and that's not what we want. "We try and create something different and yet successful for them. We got rid of exercise books and text books too. The laptops are good for those with difficulty writing and spelling. Computers are still a novelty. No homework either.

FAME operates under some simple rules which are worked out and agreed to by both staff and students: Respect, Participation and Safety are the foundation of our rules. We use a student induction pack about what we do and what the rules are. There's a student agreement form too. These lead to a conducive learning environment in which the students feel safe and respected and their learning needs can be addressed.

As mentioned earlier, students and staff evaluate the participation of the young people after each session. It may be go-karting, skating or horse riding. This reward structure reinforces appropriate and responsible behaviour.

It may be go-karting, skating or horse riding. This reward structure reinforces appropriate and responsible behaviour.

How much of the program centres around boys?

We have always been co-ed. With all the students, once they form friendships that's when they turn up. It's their need for a social outlet, breaking down the social isolation. They get bored with being at home and want something better to do than stay home.

Do the boys dominate the peer group? Do you have to deal with boys anger? I've found students tend to behave because they get a say. FAME is flexible, voluntary. The hard part is getting started. If they say "I don't want to do that" then I come back again in 5 minutes and say "How about having a go?" There's no real problems with peer group dynamics. They get on well. At times, there are long term arguments, but in that case the boy tends not to turn up and avoids it in that way.

What have been the effects so far?

Now in our third year. I've noticed that the kids' self confidence is built up. You can see changes. One boy couldn't even step outside the door, another I mentioned already who couldn't go to school as a result of bullying. It was an inhibition kind of thing, wasn't confident enough. He's now at TAFE. Last year we had 14 students, 2 went back to school (didn't work) 2 went to TAFE, and others are seeking employment. We see some growth as human being, feel good about themselves, willing to have a go instead of taking the attitude "Nah, that's too hard".

What is the Flexible and Accredited part of the program?

The program is flexible in that it allows the young people's learning to be self paced. The accreditation of the program (we offer Certificate 1 in Preparatory Education and some units in introductory Vocational Education Certificate) is an important component of the program in that it provides young people with legitimate pathways into further education, employment and training. An accredited curriculum also provides the opportunity for early school leavers to gain the confidence required to "learn" again by providing a step by step approach to learning skills. Being mobile allows the program to utilise community resources so that when young people exit the program they have been in touch with contact persons and services.

How did FAME come about?

The FAME program developed as a response to an assembly of Christian Brothers in Perth in 1995. The Brothers decided to set up a new venture in Adelaide but were unsure of what was needed. After some research and consultation with a range of people in the northern and southern suburbs of Adelaide, particularly in Hackham West and Elizabeth, it became apparent that working with disadvantaged youth and their families was a priority.

In October 1996, six young people (4 boys and 2 girls) were enrolled with the assistance of the Department of Education & Children's Services in the program as a pilot group. As a result of the pilot program it became obvious that there was a need to provide educational services to school-refusing young people under the age of 15 years. It seemed that youth over the age of 15 years were well catered for by government and charitable organisations but nothing was being done for a significant group of young people in Hackham West and surrounding areas. Hence in 1997, the FAME program came into existence.

What have you learnt?

One of the most important things was that all young people want to learn but that some of the structures and systems do not cater for their needs. The traditional classroom environment and curriculum are not suitable for some students. A competency-based style of learning allows students to achieve in a variety of situations

We learnt a holistic approach was necessary and the educational needs of the young person are influenced by their emotional and social needs. Their physical needs also come into play for it has been a common experience of ours that sometimes the young person comes to us having spent the night away from home and is hungry and needs a sleep. Unless we address their need for food, they are in no state to learn.

What do the students and parents say?

They tell me "yeah, we're learning something, but it's not someone standing up the front" and dictating in a rigid kind of way. We don't have very much contact with parents. Once a term, there's a Pathway meeting between the youth worker, student and parent. We present the positives of what's being going on. It's an important part of the process. "You're doing good at woodwork, so what other areas would you like to improve on?" The parents are happy about son or daughter getting up in the morning and being happy about going to FAME. Better relationships, getting on better at home. They want a five day program.

What message do you have for other teachers?

Many of the lessons that we have learnt in dealing with youth are strong reminders of good practice in the path of teaching. The building of relationships with students is the foundation on which the development of learning occurs. Success is the key to motivating students to learn. On FAME the reward is a tangible one - a day away from learning!. Finding ways to reward a student, especially on the spur of the moment, are difficult but we must reward and motivate young people.

When a young person is not achieving in the classroom, we educators need to examine ourselves to see what we are doing that is not meeting the needs of the young person. Whilst this is painful, self examination and self criticism might help in dealing with the source of the problem.

The key elements of FAME are: the Student Forum; that we do not act as teachers; the Pathways meetings and the variety of activities and venues. But FAME is not a soft option. The young people are challenged but the adults do this knowing that the young people will be successful. We have found that young people are grateful for our efforts to assist them. Unfortunately we may never see the results of our efforts.

Providing Community Support For Boys In Schools

Deborah Hartman interviews a child, his mother, the teacher, the school principal, the volunteer and the co-ordinator of a Homelink program run by the Family Action Centre of The University of Newcastle.[1]

[1]Note: The names in this article have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

The Homelink Program

Managing difficult or disruptive boys has always been a major concern of teachers. While learning difficulties can be identified in some cases, schools have long recognised that many problems have a social or emotional component originating in the home or community. While schools cannot avoid dealing with the resultant behaviours, professional help is often not available.

One community-based program that has been successful in providing support to schools is the Homelink program, that offers a trained volunteer to support a school child who is experiencing stress or difficulty. The program provides a link between families, schools and communities, as well as providing practical caring assistance to students. A paid coordinator recruits, trains and supports the volunteers and liaises with the families, schools and other agencies.

Seventy-five percent of the referrals to Homelink programs are boys. About a third of Homelink volunteers are men.

Jason is eleven years old. His father was killed in a road accident when Jason was seven. After that traumatic event, both the school and his mother were concerned about his behaviour.

Jason, I want to talk to you about Homelink today and about your volunteer Carl who comes to do stuff with you. So what sort of stuff do you do together?
Well we ride down to the youth centre and just ride around places and he is teaching me how to get from the street, and in the pool I can now swim about a hundred metres I think. He said that one day he might take me up to the wetlands and get a canoe and we'll go canoeing at the wetlands.

Can you remember what it was like before he started coming to visit?
Well, I was suspended about 3 times a month and I was getting into heaps of trouble nearly every day and, well, I hardly did any work and if I didn't feel up to doing anything I just said "No, don't have to do it', or something like that. Now I am starting to get used to working.

What's it like at school for you now?
Good. I haven't got suspended once this year. I think I have been on detention once this year. Yeah and everything that happened last year how I was bad and everything, they said that they would wipe it off and they are going to start a new day, from now on. And so before you started seeing Carl, how were you feeling? Angry, like I'd hit people all the time. Like in lines, if they went like that to me (a slight nudge),I would hit 'em. I am a lot more calmer now and I don't get into as much trouble.

So, do you still get angry?
Yeah, sometimes. Sometimes I just go away from them, and just go somewhere else and play.

Anything else you want to say about Carl?
He is good. He's a good man, like he helps me a lot, like helping me fixing the bike up and everything. When I go up to his house we do some reading and play a bit of euchre, cause he taught me how to play euchre. We're reading this book on short stories.

He's a good man, like he helps me a lot, like helping me fixing the bike up and everything.

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Carl has been a Homelink volunteer for almost two years.

Carl, what made you want to be a Homelink volunteer?
I always had an interest in the local area here, with the kids wandering around the streets, but I had a growing family and was working flat out and I did not pursue it any further. Then one of my girls, they must have known that I was interested in this area, and they found a little ad in the paper for volunteer course with Homelink. I rang up and started.

So what sort of things do you do together?
Well we have been fishing, that was great fun. We go to the youth centre where we play pool and joke around. We have done a lot of bike riding together. There are jumps in the park across the road from his place and my place as well and we race around there and we play cricket, one on one touch football.

Just two days ago I have started another approach and I have begun to read a short story out of a book which he seemed to go to sleep on a little - I called it off when I noticed that. But he seems keen to go on with that - I want him to read to me the next story.

I am also teaching him to swim. He couldn't swim 5 metres now he swims hundreds of metres and he is really pleased with himself. He didn't think he could do it. So it's been really good.

Do you talk much - you and him together?
I was probably a little pushy earlier in the relationship. So I said, "if there is anything that you want to talk about just say so". I tried that approach a few times but I realise that was the wrong approach, so since then we just do things together. He does ask the odd thing now and then but it is not personal stuff, not as yet.

Have you noticed any changes in his behaviour in the time that you have been with him?
Yes I have. When I first started with him he was having big problems at home and at school. That's why I was given the task of working with him. With me personally he wasn't bad to start with, because I was a different person, not part of school or home. He has come right out of a shell that he seemed to be in, and he laughs and he jokes and it is just full on. He tries to trick me all the time, which I didn't teach him, and it is really good stuff. So I have noticed he is a lot happier. I think I have helped a little in being a role model I suppose, but not as an idol or something of a higher standard - just a role model.

I think I have helped a little in being a role model I suppose, but not as an idol or something of a higher standard - just a role model.

What sort of role do you play with his Mum and his little sisters?
Well, I have I believe a good rapport with his mother and she trusts me. When we want to go for a ride on the bikes or whatever, I ask her if it is okay in case she has got other plans. And I also tell her how long we will be and what time I will have him home, if I pick him up by car. She seems happy with that.

She talks about how they don't get on at home, mother and son. I really haven't had a lot of input in that family area as such. Then I would like to see Jason reach his late teens getting on well with his mother and not being rebellious and him wanting to leave because of resentment. I hope I can have that influence with him and his mother.

So what role does the coordinator play?
They are very supportive. This is my first link, my first family I've worked with, and it's been good. Its good for after an attempt, whether I did something wrong, or something didn't go as well as I thought, I can always get a debriefing after that.

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I was a bricklayer for 25 years. I always had an interest in welfare, like I said with the youth. The volunteer course opened that door for me, gave me an insight.

What difference do you think it makes to Jason that you're a man working with him as a volunteer?

Because we do boys stuff. Now, I don't mean that a woman couldn't do boys stuff. But I believe because Jason is a boy we just relate to those boy things better because I have done all that boys stuff myself. In my view, a female volunteer would be more a nurturing caring role where as mine is more of a 'lets go out and bash the ball around', and play tricks on each other, things like that.

I'll use an example and this was new ground for me. When we go to the pool, we swim and then we go and have a shower. At first I noticed he was very shy when it came to getting changed out of his togs and toweling off. Young kids in that shower room were stripping off and it didn't bother them because they had their fathers or their brothers with them. He doesn't have a brother and he doesn't have a father, but I noticed as we progressed along, after each visit there he got less and less shy about dropping his togs and toweling off and then putting his clothes on. I made not big deal of it, I said nothing about anything, but I did notice. Probably I notice because I haven't had a son to take to a change room or do those boys things, because I have daughters. That is where I feel there was a difference between a male and female.

He brought his bike down and we worked on it and I noticed that, when I took a bolt of one side, he took the matching one on the other side. I watched what he did with it, and I put mine on the floor where I could find it, and he did exactly the same thing. So he is copying everything I do. I have to be careful of that, because if I swear or do something that is not appropriate he is going to follow.

Has being a volunteer in Homelink had benefits for you in your personal life as well?

I was a bricklayer for 25 years. I always had an interest in welfare, like I said with the youth. The volunteer course opened that door for me, gave me an insight. I was able to mix with people in that course that were actually doing or completing the welfare course that I am doing now. So yeah it opened a door for me definitely.

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Faith was born in Fiji. She is Jason's mother. She also has twin daughters who are 17 months old.

What made you decide the Homelink Program would be okay for Jason?
Well, being a single mum, I have tried everything for Jason. He went to a special school. That really didn't do him much good at all. He wasn't a really good kid at school at all. So I just talked to teachers, talked to the principal and they suggested to me that Homelink might do him good. I just thought that Jason needs somebody besides me and my friends to talk about his problems.

They do things together. Most times I can't do things with him because of the babies. I've got twin girls. They are seventeen months. Jason is my oldest.

So, what changes have you seen in Jason since he started with Homelink?
Carl seeing Jason has made a big difference. He looks forward to Friday, Carl coming and playing cards. I try my best to spend a little bit of time with him when the girls are asleep but most of the time I have cleaning up to do. Carl plays games, cards, goes for bike rides, things that I can't do without a car. Sometimes they go to Carl's house and he finds it pretty good going there. He has made a lot of changes in him.

He's just different. He was so much trouble. He listens more to me now than before. Before he was having trouble with his behaviour, his attitude, his temper. He didn't want to do anything with me. He would say, 'I am always at home with you', cause having brand new babies in the house you can't get out.

Jason is a really good reader. He always loves stories, he would write stories when he was in kindergarten. He loves reading, he has quite a lot of books. Carl reads to him too.

Every Friday he tells me "Ah Mum, Carl will be here soon. I am going to go out soon." He gets all his stuff packed up to go to the pool. And he is really proud of the fact that he can swim now. He loves swimming. A lot of times I can't take him, with two babies in one pool and I have got to watch him and the twins.

And he would come home and would have had such a good time. Every time he has gone out with Carl, he comes home and just talks and talks about what they did, how they did it. 'Carl's's got a bike' - he was just going on and on about that.

Do you think things have changed between you and Jason, because of Homelink?
I really believe that Jason and I needed a break - I needed the break from him and he needed the break from me. Because a lot of times we didn't get along. He used to get cranky and I used to get cranky with him, I would put him in his room, he used to say - make me - and that gets me going, and he just has a really bad temper you know.

Things are a lot easier between us again. He was jealous too, when the twins were born. For the first time then he couldn't understand why I couldn't spend much time with him and he loves going out doing things. We go to the movies sometimes, and we go to a lot of other places. Like for his birthday I paid someone to look after the twins. I spend the whole day with him, we went out for lunch, the club and the movies, and he loved that. But you see he has been the only child for so long and sort of like a shock to his system too. He thought - lets play up for mummy, but he is taking it pretty good now. He loves his sisters.

I think the Homelink is helping and Carl working with him has made a lot of difference. He helps me a lot now, like helps me around the house so I can do something with him while the girls are asleep. He is really happy.

I try my best to spend a little bit of time with him when the girls are asleep but most of the time I have cleaning up to do.

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Lawrence is currently an assistant principal of a large public school. He has had many years of teaching experience. Last year he taught Year 5 full time and Jason was in his class.

Jason's name was frequently raised in staff meetings, or in the staff room in common conversation, as being a pain in the butt - a child who was very negative to talk with.

Could you talk a little about what Jason was like when you first met him?
When he came to this school he was a very unsettled boy, very little respect for anyone and it took a long time to settle him down. The method I used was talking with him not at him and it took quite a number of months to bring him on to a more equal footing and for him to recognise and show respect for others around him. He did build up a good one to one relationship with me by the end, but in other areas, such as the playground or when other teachers came in, he threw the barrier up and he lost it.

And so why was Homelink thought to be appropriate for him?
Well, one of the main things is the person doing the Homelink was a male, and within the home itself there was no male figure. By having a male figure to do male sorts of things gives him an identity, a lot of purpose and a good role model to look up to. Importantly, his own self esteem came through and I think this has made a huge difference to him.

So, do you think the benefits that you just talked about have lasted for him?
Jason's name was frequently raised in staff meetings, or in the staff room in common conversation, as being a pain in the butt - a child who was very negative to talk with. Towards the end of last year, and this year more so, his name is very rarely mentioned.

His classroom teacher this year talks to Jason on the quiet, not in a confrontational way, and has a very good relationship with him. When he (the teacher) walks into the room Jason has got his head down and he is into his work.

Have his academic skills changed over this time?
Yes he's working by himself, and he is achieving quite well and is getting very positive praise. His self confidence has increased and I think you will find that he is in the average in most groups that he goes to, which is really great because particularly at this age, he has possibly got the potential to go down and stay down. But with the support that he has been given it has picked him up.

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Andrew is currently the principal of the large coastal public school where Jason attends. The school caters for years K to 6. It has 600 children, 25 teachers and 6 support staff. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Why did you decide to have the Homelink program in your school?
I'd been involved in another school where we had a Homelink program and we'd had great success there, particularly with the boys, in turning around their behaviour, their academic performance and their social and cultural achievements.

Who was Homelink aimed at?
It was aimed at particular children to help them see another way of relating. We didn't just target behaviour problems. Some children had a need for social development too. We have had both girls and boys in the program but certainly, it's always been a much greater percentage of boys.

It also helped those parents who were having difficulty coping with parenting, and managing their role as parents, and therefore could not provide good role models for their children. The volunteers provided good role models for the parents on how they could support their children to achieve at school.

We have a section of crisis housing in our drawing area and there are many single mothers in that situation. The boys on our program tend to act out with bad behaviours when their families are in crisis and sometimes the mothers find it difficult to cope with them, particularly if there has been a father who was the main disciplinarian and he is no longer there. Although, we have also had a single father on our program.

We have had failures too. Not every case is a success.

What lessons did you learn from running Homelink in your school?
An important factor is that it takes a long time for the program to start to work. It takes about three to six months before you start to see the benefits for an individual child. But after that time the effects stay. Even when the volunteer is no longer there, the benefits stay with the child and they don't revert back to their previous behaviour.

We saw Homelink as an integral part of our student welfare policy. It increased the partnership between the school and the home. The strength of Homelink is that it can provide that link. The volunteers approach the home and they spend time with the child. They make sure that what school is trying to do with the child is better understood by home. They can help the home become closer to the school. Without this program, there are some homes we would not be able to reach.

The program couldn't run without the co-ordinator. This is why you need the funding. The co-ordinator keeps it all running smoothly, supporting the volunteers and keeping us informed. It's a great program. I wish we had the proper funds for it.

The program couldn't run without the co-ordinator. This is why you need the funding.

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Marion is the coordinator of the Homelink Program which operates in the area where Jason lives. The area includes several large coastal and semi-rural/industrial towns with a mix of socio-economic groups.

Some volunteers need to be reminded that they are doing a good job and that the boys really do appreciate them. They don't get a lot of feedback from the boys, because it's not cool to show emotion or affection.

How does the Homelink program operate in your area?
I coordinate the program in eleven schools - eight primary schools and three high schools. Coordinating the program means recruiting, training and supporting volunteers. We have a ten week training course, held one day a week, to inform them about the issues they may encounter in their volunteering role.

The volunteers are then linked to a child at school. School teachers and counsellors refer students to the program. Both student and volunteer are matched by a variety of criteria before being linked. I also liaise with other agencies. The Department Of Community Services also refer children to us.

The volunteers, the children on the program, their families and the staff working with them in schools, all need support and feedback. The schools and agencies sometimes require written reports. But with parents, it's a lot more low-key - a cuppa and a chat. We try to be more like a friend, not like other interventions in their lives, that may be unwelcome. They gain trust and often open up and tell us what's really going on in their lives and how difficult it sometimes is. The volunteers are a special friend to the child, someone to talk to or play with, or they just listen. The volunteers usually visit their student once a week, either at the school or at home. It depends on the circumstances of each child.

Who are the main referrals?
In primary schools, most of the referrals come from Years two, four and six and in high schools, it's year seven. The majority of the referrals are boys - about 75%. Girls are referred too, but I think boys' behaviours are more likely to come to the attention of the teacher.

That's why we realised we needed more men volunteers, as there are so many boys on the program with few male role models in their lives. So our campaign was to recruit more. Now we have about 34 active volunteers, 24 women and 10 men.

Women and men sometimes have different motivations for volunteering. I find women volunteers often have been helped themselves before, and they say "My child was helped and now I want to give back." For the men, some of them are in their middle years and have been made redundant or retrenched, or they want to try a change in career. Their skills that they have gained in the workplace, or in their profession, are very useful as a volunteer.

Both the men and the women volunteers sometimes have a difficult time with some boys on the program, especially those entering high school. The boys at this age are often confused as to what's happening in their lives. They may see themselves as worthless, and find it hard to move forward even though they have the potential. They often get into power struggles.

Supporting the volunteers is paramount for me. Some volunteers need to be reminded that they are doing a good job and that the boys really do appreciate them. They don't get a lot of feedback from the boys, because it's not cool to show emotion or affection. If the volunteer can't come one week, the next week the boy might say accusingly, "Where were you last week?" rather than being able to say 'I really missed you."

Co-ordinating the program is a big job but it's very rewarding. To know that a student has had the opportunity for growth through being linked with a volunteer makes it worthwhile.

Information about the Homelink program or Homelink Resource Package, which provides information for setting up and running a Homelink Program, can be obtained from Family Action Centre: Ph (02) 49216749. Fax (02) 49216934.

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Women Leading In Boys' Education

At the National Forum on Leadership in Boys' Education convened by the Men and Boys Program in Newcastle last May, approximately ninety female school principals and deputy principals met to discuss women's role in the area of Boys' Education. During the workshop session the participants broke into groups to identify their answers to three questions: What do boys need most in our/your view?; What are critical elements of leading on boys issues?; and, What would boys be learning from the way you carry out your role?

The intention of the workshop was to provide a starting point to begin discussing the important role that women leaders play in developing appropriate boys' education. The answers given by the workshop participants were recorded and edited to avoid duplication.

Female school leaders participating in the Women's Leadership workshop

1. What do boys need most in your view?

- Sense of identity / self esteem - continuity of past to future
- Understanding of why they do what they do
- Love and belonging
- Sense of competence / power to do / power to break out of a mould
- Feel accepted and respected
- Organisation skills
- Accept that it is OK to achieve
- Security / structural guidelines
- Sense of justice
- Outlet for physical needs
- Permission to make mistakes - allowance to fail and to learn from the experience
- Something more meaningful and relevant for an emerging adolescent or emerging adult than what is being offered in some education contexts
- To have the opportunity to find out about themselves and human behaviours
- To know about boys'/males' health issues and male development
- To have friendly / supportive informed teachers and parents
- To understand why education / schooling is valuable
- To feel safe
- To build coping strategies and emotional resilience against stress
- To know how to behave in an acceptable way to meet society's expectations
- Literacy - critical, evaluative
- Valuing the boys' culture / icons (such as skateboards)
- Heroes/pro-social male role models
- Communication skills
- Social interactions with "appropriate" males
- Respect for elders
- Other conflict resolution strategies for dealing with problems
- Validation of boys' individuality while recognising their fragility
- Fun / humour
- Challenges
- Responsibility
- Have some control for their activity learning

The intention of the workshop was to provide a starting point to begin discussing the important role that women leaders play in developing appropriate boys' education.

2. Critical elements of leading on boys' issues from our view.

* Liking of boys actively
* Be aware of own perceptions
* Role modelling - fairness and consistency
* Appropriate training for teachers
* Being optimistic
* Be more aware of learning styles and teaching styles-review curriculum
* Provide more pastoral care of boys e.g. camps, sporting events
* Differentiate the behaviour vs person
* Develop strong welfare / form groups
* Possibly total review of current structure
* Review / revise curriculum
* Not to fall into / be pushed into / to adopt traditional gender roles in schools
* Not to place too many expectations / unrealistic or inappropriate expectations on ourselves to be "like the males" or wield power in the same way
* To communicate with parents in an honest and upfront way and to share good practice with them.
* Provide both male and females in leadership roles
* Need more 'good' teachers - rather than more male teachers
* Develop a Behaviour Management Plan valued by community, teachers, parents, students.

3. What would boys be learning from the way you carry out your role?

* Consistent, firm, caring and "tough" when necessary
* Women can work in equal partnership with men
* Learning different forms of conflict resolution - more collaborative approach
* Ability to demonstrate tough (strength) without entering power plays - being tough is not necessarily the way to solve problems
* That being male (or female) doesn't require that you act in a particular way
* Women are nurturing, caring
* Its OK to show feelings and to verbalise their feelings
* Women can be communicated to and with in a positive way
* That there are boundaries that cannot be broken
* Women can be tough - determined and will persevere
* Power 'to do' versus power over
* All people matter
* Be true to yourself
* Strength does not equal muscle
* Strength of consultative leadership
* Power of consistency and persistence
* You will treat them as a respected person
* Employment of 'fair' casual teachers (justice)
* Know girls can be more articulate than boys
* You are prepared to listen - take interest in the boys' interests
* Be fair, like them, be consistent
* Women can be in power and trusted

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Working With Aboriginal Boys

Robert Salt from the Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Team presented at the LEADERSHIP IN BOY'S EDUCATION NATIONAL FORUM, Newcastle, May 12-13 1999

Before we start, it needs to be noted that the information in this article is generic. While there are similarities for Aboriginal Boys, there are differences in the way they talk, dress, behave and their experiences. Also that there is very little literature relating to Aboriginal boys. So most of the strategies offered in this article, are from my own experiences as a young aboriginal man, and now currently a service working with Aboriginal boys.

For most boys there are some general commonalities such as going to school, puberty and discovering their identity. But for Aboriginal boys, there is difference in what happens before they go to school, how they interact with teachers and students, and the mixed messages they receive about there cultural identity.

To have an understanding of what has contributed to shaping an Aboriginal boy, it is important to look at what has influenced his culture and family.

From this century, three policies I have highlighted three significant areas that have had a profound effect on Aboriginal boys. These are The Segregation Policy, The Assimilation Policy and the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.

Segregation Policy 1890s-1950s

- Thinking was to 'civilise the savages'
- Mission and government reserves established often in unwanted land
- Poor housing and health
- Aboriginal children were removed from their natural communities.

Assimilation Policy 1950s - 1960s

- Thinking was to make Aboriginal people white so that there were no distinctions between them and others
- Continued breakdown of Aboriginal identity and culture
- Lower wages

These policies have had a strong affect on Aboriginal boys and young men. A lot of Aboriginal people were rounded up and moved onto missions or government reserves. The role of the male had been a main bread winner, being a family figure, someone with a high self esteem. When they were forced onto the missions it took away the men's power and it was often up to the mothers to try and provide food like flour and sugar. The men trying to go out and get a bit of station work or shearing work often were looked upon and treated like children. They were treated roughly by the police or the station managers and that actually put in to effect a couple of generations in the male losing power and losing self esteem and feeling that he hasn't had a positive effect in the family structure. A really strong male figure has been replaced by one who is just lost. This is being passed down from generation to generation. A major effect of these policies was removal of Aboriginal children and a lot of these young children never learnt positive parenting skills such as cuddling, or how to love, or simple things like how to react positively, whether that is passing a ball or simply just going for a walk in the park. A lot of these young boys grew up into men, they never learnt how to communicate with their care givers and when they had children thus they weren't able to basically love and pass on positive parenting skills. I am finding that a lot of young men now particularly in their early thirties who are having children aren't able to be a really strong positive role model even though they want to be they just never learnt how to be. So many Aboriginal boys now don't always have strong male role models around them.

When they were forced onto the missions it took away the men's power and it was often up to the mothers to try and provide food like flour and sugar.

Illustrations by Robert Salt

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Students who know they are Aboriginal, but don't look it, tell me that they feel that the teacher just totally ignored them.

Another result, particularly from the assimilation policy, was a breakdown in Aboriginal identity. The assimilation policy officially finished in late 1960's so that there are Aboriginal men now that are even in their thirties who grew up through their early years under the assimilation policy and were denied their Aboriginal identity. Now that they have children they are unable to pass down a lot of their culture and a lot of their traditional ways, particularly to their sons, because they were never able to learn that growing up.

The lack of identity is important in the classroom. Because a teacher doesn't see an Aboriginal boy within their class who physically looks black, as in skin tone or the broad nose or the other physical features, they will often talk to the class about Aboriginal cultures and society as if there is not any Aboriginal people in the room. Students who know they are Aboriginal, but don't look it, tell me that they feel that the teacher just totally ignored them. Aboriginal boys have felt that they would rather be included in the some of the discussion. When I have talked to them after the class finished a couple of weeks on Aboriginal culture or society they just felt low in their self esteem and they didn't really want to identify because they just spent two weeks talking about their culture and the teachers neglected to notice that they are Aboriginal.

I understand how they feel. I grew up in a town called Brewarrina which is a very high Aboriginal population. I went to a school with perhaps a 98% Aboriginal population. I always knew I was Aboriginal as it was constantly reinforced. I moved to Maitland and there were four Aboriginal students out of 1000 and that was the time when I really knew what it meant to not look Aboriginal. By that, I mean students and teachers did not regard me as being Aboriginal. I constantly had to reinforce within myself that I was black even though people were saying I wasn't.

That's why it is important to have some program to support identity even if there aren't large numbers of Aboriginal students in the school. It is also important for non-Aboriginal educators to think about how to deal with Aboriginal boys in their schools. Here are some issues which you may discover with Aboriginal boys, and some suggested strategies.

Eye Contact

Some Aboriginal boys will not continually look you in the eye, but will instead fiddle with a piece of the clothing, stare at the ground or very briefly look in your eyes then turn away. There are two reasons for this. Firstly direct eye contact is considered rude and disrespectful. This is a cultural feature. The second is shame for his actions. This concept of shame is more strongly present in Aboriginal society then non-Aboriginal society.

For the reader it is important for you to understand that they are listening even though it may appear that they are not. To become accustomed to this way of speaking, initially, may feel uncomfortable since you are used to eye contact to show understanding. But over time you will become use to it.

Your attitude/body language

What you think of Aboriginal boys and their culture will be evident in your body language. If it is negative this will be picked up on and ultimately impinge productive engagement.

Strategy

You will need to unlearn what your learnt about Aboriginal boys and their culture. Write down all of your thoughts when you think of an Aboriginal boy. Then research into both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. Talk with Aboriginal services and people in your community.

When you do this, two changes will possibly occur:

1. You will be more enlightened about Aboriginal culture
2. By being genuinely interested and making contact, word will spread that you

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are "fair dinkum". Aboriginal boys will here this and may be more approachable or approach you.

Offensive language/terminology

When talking with and about Aboriginal boys, the words that you use can be highly offensive. Do not use terms such as part-aborigine, full-blood, half-caste, quarter-caste. The government classifications used to classify Aboriginal people according to skin colour and parentage used these terms.

Strategy

Depending on where your Aboriginal community is located, there are other terms that can be used. For example:

Murri	Queensland, North West NSW
Nyoongah	Western Australia
Koori	NSW
Goori	Northern NSW
Nunga	Certain part of South Australia

To be sure, ask the local Aboriginal community and/or the Aboriginal boy on what would be the best term. As previously stated, this will show that you are taking an interest in his culture.

Silence

When you are talking with an Aboriginal boy, they may become silent. This could be for a number of reasons. They do not understand what you are saying, they do no agree with you, they are thinking or they are shame.

Strategy

It is important to give adequate time for response and to ask if they do not understand anything that you have said. Try not to use big words.

Interviewing/counselling

Among other factors, how and where you meet will effect how successful you were in engaging.

Strategy

If possible choose settings other then a small room. This could be a park or a walk around the oval. If a small room is unavoidable, do not place yourself in front of the door. The Aboriginal boy will feel confined and trapped, instead allow them to have a visible clear path to the door.

Anger

What I am finding is that Aboriginal boys are displaying their anger in more physical and visible ways than Aboriginal girls. This could be in the form of swearing, through objects, punching walls etc. Allot of this frustration stems from not having the verbal skills to express any difficulties that they are experiencing.

Strategies

What I have done is to create an anger diary. This diary differs from others because it allows the boy to write down and/or draw how they are feeling. This diary is something that I talk through with him and his care givers, also they often want to put Aboriginal designs on the cover. By drawing how they feel, it is often an effective way to start with helping them to verbally describing what they are going through by explaining the pictures.

Identity

When an Aboriginal boy does not have a clear understanding of his Aboriginal identity, it can impact all aspects of his life. The effects are poor physical and emotional health, behavioural problems, disrespect for people and property, confusion and anger. In traditional settings, identity was never an issue. Older men who would share their wisdom and skills would have guided Aboriginal boys. Also the Aboriginal boys knew that they were expected to take on certain roles. It has only been through the intentional breakdown of culture that has made it an issue today. I was told once by an uncle that to gain a white education you lose or trade in parts of your Aboriginality.

So what is Aboriginality? This is a complex term and has many meanings for different people. For one Aboriginal boy it can mean knowing what language group they come from, for another the Aboriginal dances they do, for a non-Aboriginal person it can mean how dark their skin is.

Strategies An example of an identity program

The Tharanka program: Aboriginal identity, cultural awareness and well-being I developed ran last year. It was a nine week program. Originally I wanted it one period per week but the students after the first week said "No, we want 2 periods per week". So for a while we had two periods per week. There were 15 students including two girls. The boys really wanted to know simple things like their language group, or where they came from. They wanted to speak a little bit of Aboriginal language. They just wanted some tangible thing that they could show the school that they were proud young Aboriginal boys and in the transition to young Aboriginal men. They also want to learn about the stolen generation and Native Title and MABO which they constantly heard things about but because they didn't feel confident talking about they basically kept their mouths shut. In the program I gave them the information and we discussed different aspects about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal society. After the nine weeks I felt that the Aboriginal boys definitely had a stronger look and a prouder stance about them.

Robert Salt can be contacted at the Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health, Newcastle Mental Health Team. Parry St. Newcastle West 2302 Phone 0249623805

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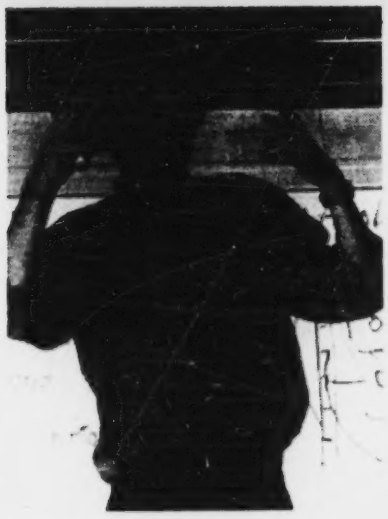

Steve Biddulph presenting at the Forum

Conference Report

Leadership in Boys' Education National Forum

May 12,13 1999

Two hundred and ninety principals, deputy principals and leading teachers gathered in Newcastle to hear presentations from Steve Biddulph, Don Edgar, Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne and case studies from principals who had made progress in boys' education. A number of skills updates covering: Depression, Multiple Intelligence, Behaviour Management, Women Teachers and Indigenous Issues as they relate to boys were also offered.

The majority of those at the Forum were principals, with some deputy principals, leading teachers and educational administrators attending. Delegates came from all states and territories in Australia and three delegates came from New Zealand

Case Studies from the following schools were presented: Mallauna Secondary College VIC, Canterbury Boy's High School NSW, Quakers Hill Primary School NSW, Maryborough State High School QLD, St Bernard's College VIC, Manilla Central School NSW, Uralla Central School NSW, St Ignatius College Riverview NSW, Oxley High School NSW, Bullsbrook District High School WA, Coleambally Central School NSW, St Augustine's Primary School VIC, Kurri Kurri High School NSW, Campbell Town District High School TAS, Cherrybrook Technology High School NSW, Redfield College NSW,

Feedback: We received some feedback before the forum had even begun. Since this was the first time that principals had been offered a chance to discuss the issue of leadership in boys' education we were unsure of how many participants would register. We estimated a maximum of 100 delegates and booked conference space accordingly. When the number reached two hundred and ninety we started turning people away. In the end, over 300 attended and we had to refuse almost 100 more applications. Comments on the feedback sheets suggested not only that participants found much of value in the keynote presentations, the case studies and the informal discussions, but for many it was a confirmation that the hard work they had already been doing was on the right track.

Want to Know More?

Two ways that you can find out what happened:

For the aurally inclined:

A copy of the taped sessions including keynote presentations and case studies is available. See the order form included with this bulletin.

For the readers:

A book of the conference has been produced with speeches by keynote presenters, transcripts of the case studies, and some additional material prepared for this publication. A copy of this order form is also included.

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Dealing With the Impact of Suicide

Mark Evans, Principal

St Mary's School, a rural Catholic school of 250 prides itself in the many ways it creates a nurturing and safe environment for the young children in its care. A caring and supportive staff ensure a strong pastoral care policy and program commits the school to being a place where young people are nurtured in every way.

In the early hours of one morning a young man not connected with the school, hung himself in a covered play area. He inadvertently selected an important gathering place in our school to commit suicide. The area is close to our toilet block a few metres from the school's drinking fountains and sports' store room and ten metres from our school canteen. All the children in the school frequent the enclosure several times a day. The expansive concrete area is a favourite place for handball. Both primary and infant sections often hold their weekly assemblies in the area. For all in our school, it is a meeting place, a playing area and refreshing area. Tragically the young man chose it for a different purpose.

The morning of the tragedy, I was at a conference three hours away by car. A passing grandparent of one of the children from our school first noticed the young man's body and notified the police. The police soon arrived and a barricade was erected to shield the children from the sight. However, several children arriving at school early saw young man's body. Later we learnt of a police protocol to not touch anything at such a scene before the forensic police ascertain the cause of death. Later that morning, the body was taken down and the area cleared of the barricade.

The atmosphere in the school was sombre and dark. Whilst police investigations were under way, the children were kept away from the scene by the teachers. Naturally enough, speculation was rife amongst the children about what had occurred and children who had observed the young man's body filled in the gaps to the conjecture. The staff met briefly and the Assistant Principal outlined events to them. A course of action was determined: take the children into their classrooms, get the day under way. In the meantime, the Assistant Principal communicated with our Schools' Office, Counselling Support Services, and Parish Priest about what had eventuated.

The Assistant Principal visited each classroom where he gently, yet clearly outlined the events that had occurred that morning. The children were encouraged to ask questions and discuss the events. In the meantime, the school secretary attended to many enquiries from concerned parents and towns people. Media enquiries were directed to the police. Parents who wished to collect their children were encouraged to do so. During the recess and lunch breaks a pall of disbelief came across the school. The children and staff were obviously affected.

During the recess and lunch breaks a pall of disbelief came across the school. The children and staff were obviously affected.

Upon my hasty return, the school on the surface seemed to be quite normal. The enormity of what had transpired was etched clearly on the faces of the staff. They were pale, drawn and obviously very upset but continued to employ their duty of care towards the children, ensuring that the day continued as normally as possible. After being briefed by the Assistant Principal I made a visit to each of the classrooms to speak with the teacher to see how they were standing up and to be seen by the children. I did not speak directly to the classes at this stage as this had been done earlier. I tried to be a reassuring presence to the staff and the children. In the afternoon I visited the parents of the young man and, on behalf of our school, expressed our community sorrow for what had taken place. Their grief was overpowering. I felt the fact that their son had taken his own life in a primary school added to their sense of loss and pain. The fact that so many other people, particularly children had been drawn into this tragedy seemed to add further gravity to their sorrow.

A letter would be sent home to parents outlining what had occurred, what needed to be done to support the children through the foreseeable future.

At the close of the school day when the children had gone home, a psychologist from the St. Laurence Centre, the Counselling and Special Education Centre for our diocese spent sometime with the staff in a debriefing session. About 12 people crammed into my office, some silent, some crying, all very touched and exhausted by the day's events. This session lasted for about an hour and it was agreed then that two counsellors would come back to the school firstly on the following Monday and through the next week to support the children and the staff.

To add further confusion, that Friday was the designated biennial fete day. We decided with our Parents and Friends Association earlier in the day that we should continue with our plans and hold the fete. Children, who were very upset with the course of events, were even more irritated with the thought of cancelling the school fete, which they were so looking forward to. As it turned out, the fete continued. Some in the town thought it callous to go ahead with our plans. Yet the response from the towns people in supporting the fete was quite overwhelming. The crowd that gathered was one of the largest in the school's history.

Every staff member supported the fete that night. Many worked on stalls, one dressed as a witch for the ghost house, and two dressing up as clowns for the children.

On the Monday, at the school executive meeting and at the following staff meeting, we decided what our response to the week would be. We decided that at the school assembly the flag would be displayed at half-mast and we would make special mention of the previous Friday's events. We would ask the children to pray for the young man, his family and our school. We also decided that a letter would be sent home to parents outlining what had occurred, what needed to be done to support the children through the foreseeable future. We recognised that the children would need a great deal of support, assurance and guidance , especially in dealing with the immediate area where the suicide took place and that there was a need to organise a special event to take the children from the school environment and divert their attention away from the tragedy.

Upon the children's arrival to school that morning, the staff maintained a highly visible presence outside the classrooms and in the playground. The children were greeted warmly by their teachers. I moved around the playground speaking with the children, greeting them, talking about the fete, their weekend. The children responded well to the assembly and the mention to the last week's events. I explained I would come and speak to them about how they felt and how we could support them. Throughout the morning, I was inundated with calls from parents concerned for the children, the school, and the young man. They sought guidance on what their response should be. A number felt we should not revisit the tragedy, as it would further upset the children. I expressed the view that it would be foolhardy to turn a blind eye to the visible and hidden reactions of the children to the suicide, some children may have been deeply affected, others not. It was best to take each child's response separately.

I feel we needed to remind some parents, they have the greatest influence on their child. Schools and counsellors have a limited sphere of influence compared with the blood family. Parents responded well to this letter. Many parents contacted the school concerned for their children. For those who sought counselling assistance, we suggested the parents speak to the counsellor regarding what should be done to assist their son or daughter. Our experience has shown it is important that significant adults in the child's life be given the skills to deal with difficult situations. This kind of support was of greater lasting value. Most children were OK, some required extra support from these specialist people. Our emphasis was for support to be given to parents who in turn would give it to their child. We tried to keep things closely aligned to the blood family. In times of crisis, we need to help the adults who have greatest influence assume responsibility for the welfare of the child. If the counsellor can help parents help the child, he's done is job well.

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On that Monday morning I visited all classrooms to discuss the event. Without demonising the poor soul who had taken his own life, I told the children old enough to understand, I thought the young man had made a wrong decision and listed my reasons why. They seemed to understand the concept that people do take options which can never be reversed, especially when they suicide. We spoke of the fact that people's actions have lasting affects on others.

My intention was to give the other side of the story in providing some balance to quite surreal circumstances. My message to the older children was simple: overt violence to one-self is not the answer.

We also called on our senior children to be aware of the needs of the younger children, for them to be sensitive of what was going on in the playground, use the leadership skills we had developed as a result of our leadership training days to reassure the younger children. They responded superbly to this call for responsibility.

Later that week the school took the day off at the pool. The children and teachers had a great time. The mood was very buoyant, the children enjoyed the opportunity to let some steam off. The barbecue was also enjoyed by the children. On the day following the pool and barbecue day, exactly one week after the suicide, it seemed as if we almost had our old school back, not that we could ignore the lasting effects of the incident.

For several weeks following the incident we continued to reassure the children that our school was a safe place and that they would not be affected by anyone doing the same violent things to them. The whole staff were highly visible on the playground each recess and lunch, playing with the children, talking to them. A simple yet potent action was to ensure that the staff on duty had closer contact with all children on the playground, talking, reassuring them. Even allocating extra staff on the playground for a few weeks ensuring the children were monitored helped resettle the school environment. The same caring monitored processes in the classroom were equally important.

Several staff members continued to have debriefing sessions with counsellors. For some time, morale and energy levels amongst the teachers and staff was very low. No staff took leave during this period except for normal daily illness yet it was quite evident the stress they were under trying to deal with their personal and collective feelings, as well as, care for the children. For myself, the reaction to the events came much later. The lasting impression of the experience for me has been the overwhelming sense of responsibility I felt for all the people in the school. Sometimes I felt so helpless when I saw what the tragedy had done to the children and especially the wonderful staff of our school. I felt responsible for their welfare.

Many of the teachers (including me) were angered that our school, a place we had all put so much personal effort to make a happy and safe place for the children, had been claimed by such a tragedy. We felt that we were no longer defining what the climate/ atmosphere of our school should be. The suicide had overwhelmed our community.

For some time many children were very reluctant to go near the area where the tragedy took place. Often teachers would take their whole class to the toilets or get a drink. Many staff members were similarly reticent. They ceased returning to school after hours for many months following the suicide. Gradually the children returned to the area for normal activities. Some children continued to become anxious, have nightmares. It didn't help when children from other schools told the children that people who suicide are destined to haunt their place of death forever. We quickly dispelled that myth. Our buddy system, which is a normal part of our school's pastoral care program continued, ensuring the children's routines and peer support were maintained.

Over a period of 6 months things settled down. Today some children still make mention of the events surrounding the tragedy. It does seem on the surface though there are no lasting observable affects of the death of a young man in our school grounds. The whole experience taught our school community a great deal about itself and how close it is. The presence and activity of the staff and the parents of the children was central to the reclaiming of our school for the children following the suicide. It has always been my belief that significant adults need to take control of events which pose a threat to the safety and security of children in their care. The suicide certainly did assume a threatening guise to our school community. But it was within the school community itself, particularly the adults to chart a long term course out of the threatening situations and reclaim the school for the children.

Leadership in Boy's Education

A publication of the Men and Boys' Program of the Family Action Centre

All of these sessions are now been transcribed and edited. The book of the conference also includes comments from the principals attending, background articles from schools involved and a summary of the comments by 90 female principals on Women's Leadership in Boys' Education.

This book is available for the special pre-publication price of $19.95 by filling in the order form below. Publication date October 99.

On the 12th and 13th May this year, 290 school principals and deputy principals from across Australia and New Zealand met in a national forum to address the pressing issue of boys' education.

Keynote presentations were made by internationally acclaimed author Steve Biddulph, and by Don Edgar.

A total of 16 case studies were also presented by principals from public and private, rural and urban, primary and secondary schools. The themes were:

Case Studies A - Across the Spectrum of Schools

Jenni Griffiths	Principal, Kempsey East Primary School NSW
Peter Ireland	Deputy Principal, St Ignatius College Riverview NSW

Case Studies B - Raising Boys' Achievement

Fred Carosi	Principal, Kogarah High School NSW
Helene Boyer	Principal, Deloraine Primary School TAS
Ian Illico	Principal, Bullsbrook District High School WA

Case Studies C - School Structure/Strategy

Lyn Wendtman	Principal, Cherrybrook Technology High School NSW
Beverley Theobald	Principal, Kurri Kurri High School NSW
Chris Bonner	Principal, Asquith Boys High School NSW

Case Studies D - Discipline/Welfare/Bullying

John Craig	Principal, Blacktown Boys High School NSW
Bill Campbell	Head Teacher, Uralla Central School NSW

Case Studies E - Broadening Boys' Options

Cheryl Hallinan	Principal, Coleambally Central School NSW
James White	Principal, Manilla Central School NSW
John McKenna	Deputy Principal, St Bernard's College VIC

Case Studies F - Building Support

Shona McKinlay	Principal, Hervey Bay State High School QLD
Andrew Mullins	Principal, Redfield College NSW
Phil Bretherton	Principal, St Augustine Primary School VIC

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...men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern

The Men and Boys Program

THE PROGRAM IS BASED IN THE **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Project was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The three programs which make up the Men and Boys Project are:

BOYSWORK - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education

Boys' behaviours and attitudes are increasingly being regarded as serious problems in our community. Boys low level of literacy and poor academic achievement are being raised alondside traditional concerns with aggression and risk taking. A key factor in all of these areas is boys' strongly held notion of how "to be a man". Boyswork refers to the newly developing ways of dealing with boys, individually and in groups, which recognises the importance of male identity. It includes skills and knowledge about boys and men.

THE FATHERCARE INITIATIVE - encouraging positive father involvement in communities

FatherCare promotes a positive social role for all adult males. Father Care recognises that a new style of fathering is needed, one based on the needs of children for mutually respectful relationships with men. This initiative stresses men's social role in the community (through volunteering for example) as well as in the family.

IMPROVING MEN'S HEALTH - research and teaching for better health

Includes the full spectrum of health from illness and disease to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Much of the research and health service delivery focussed on men has been based on a narrow disease model of health. This approach, as seen by men's poor health outcomes, is now judges to be inadequate. A more social model, incorporating men's identity, is being developed for a range of issues from prostate cancer and road traffic to depression and nutrition.

Seminars

Since its inception in January 1996, the Men & Boys Project has provided seminars for education, health, welfare and social service to professionals in all states of Australia. Parent meetings and demonstration sessions with boys have been held in remote rural as well as inner city locations.

Research

Research has been completed on men's health priorities, boy's needs, father's approaches to teaching driving, and men's behaviours in pharmacies. Action Research into the schools approaches of engaging boys in learning, and to teaching fathering issues is underway.

Publications

A range of publications on boys' education, fathering and men's health have been produced and are widely used in human services.

The project is managed by Richard Fletcher.

For further information please contact: The Men and Boys Program
Ph: 02 49 21 8739 Fax: 02 49 218686 Email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au

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Boys in Schools - Resources for Teachers Order Form

Invoices can not be sent for less than $100.00.

Make cheques payable to: Men & Boys Program

Send: Family Action Centre, Men & Boys Program
The University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308

Title	Pub. No	Price	Qty	Total
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (4 issues)	970	$35.00		
Being a Man Photopak	979	$125.00		
Boys in Schools	961	$24.95		
Getting Dads Involved in Schools	978	$14.50		
Improving Boys' Education (a manual for schools)	973	$40.00		
Man's World: A Game for Young Men A B-Team Production	974UK	$110.00		
Boyz Rulez Posters	981	$28.00		
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Vol 2 • No 3 • 1999

Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs

ED 428001

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BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN

Vol 2 No 3 October 1999

ABOUT THE BULLETIN

A focus on practical initiatives going on in schools

Putting teachers in touch with others who are trialing new approaches to boys' education

Support and encouragement for a constructive debate on boys' education issues

Develop materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys

Provide advice on the suitability of new resources directed at boys

Produced by:
The Men and Boys Program
Family Action Centre
The University of Newcastle

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Cathy Bruce
Media Resource Centre
Publications Unit
The University of Newcastle

Editorial

In school seminars we are often asked, "What do we do about boys' anger?" We have never felt totally satisfied with our answers to this question. Many teachers notice how angry boys are and wonder what they can do. These angry boys, particularly in later years, are the ones likely to head down the track into disruptive, aggressive and, for some, (ultimately) criminal behaviour. What makes up an effective way of working with boys who may be headed into criminality? How do we help them to find some pride in themselves and stand up and be counted for the positive values they believe in? John Fleming describes the evolution of a mentor program at Camden High School which begins to address this issue. Part of what makes his program work is the forming of a sense of honour among the boys so that supporting each other becomes a central part of peer dynamics. Gangs offer belonging, a sense of power and brotherhood to boys and these elements can be applied in positive and individually strengthening way that build resilience, respect for others and the capacity to take one's place in society.

The issue of identifying the real problem is one of the focuses of Trefor Lloyd's work in the UK. It's not male attributes like strength that is the problem as such but the way it is applied, particularly when men are proving that they are men. Trefor Lloyd outlines other key underpinnings in the way he approaches boyswork in this transcript of his keynote presentation at the Working With Boys, Building Fine Men Conference in Newcastle in July.

'Scoring with chicks', 'holding your piss', drugs, fast cars and violence are the kinds of activities seen by many boys as the hallmark of adult masculinity. There are few rites of passage these days for boys becoming men, besides those organised by their mates. Nigel Pizzini writes of his experiences going bush in New Zealand with 15 year olds, having conversations about moving from boyhood to manhood and marking the occasion with a group event. What can schools offer boys in marking the shift to adulthood?

The involvement of an adult to help boys understand their place and potential in the world is a critical feature in the STEP program in Geraldton, WA. Geoff Barratt describes a unique Year 11 course where boys take pride in running an on-site business and manufacturing products for sale and hire. They develop pride in themselves and a work ethic within a team. A marked contrast to the levels of disengagement often seen in non-academic Year 11 students. The Geraldton model is particularly interesting, given the recent call from the influential, UK-based Demos Institute that the future of education lies in basing it in the workplace.

In this issue we also feature the work of the Machismo Project at James Cook Boys Technology High School. This is creative arts based initiative that is breaking down stereotypes of male under-involvement in dance, drama, music, performance, filmmaking and so on. Male professional artists running workshops with boys over an extended period of time has seen a culture shift in the school where performance is 'cool' and previously disengaged boys are holding their heads up.

Lastly, we bring an important piece by Robin Blackley at Orbost Secondary College. Evaluations are fairly scarce in boys' education field, so it is with great interest we read of the assessment of their Year 8 Boys program and the decision to abandon it in favour of a range of initiatives at the school. The development of good practice in boys education does depend on thoughtful action research like this, where initiatives are taken, staff reflect on what is happening, lessons are learned from what works and what doesn't work, and programs are either refined or new directions taken in addressing the core issues.

Rollo Browne & Richard Fletcher

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The cover photo is the BIF program penalty for a code violation - a team stack. See story on page 4.

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Guidelines for Contributors

The BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content is meant to motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- *Say a bit about your school - What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?*
- *What happened?*
- *What lessons did you learn?*
- *What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?*

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at a previous issue of the Bulletin. Or contact us and talk about it.

Richard Fletcher *- Ph: 02 4921 6401 email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au*
Rollo Browne *- Ph: 02 9555 8424 email: rollo@loom.com.au*

Boys in focus

A mentoring program that diverts boys away from criminal career tracks

Rollo Browne talks to John Fleming, Camden High School, about his innovative work with boys. John presented his work recently at the Working With Boys Building Fine Men Conference in Newcastle.

BIF boys challenging the next and last ridge

Camden is a predominantly anglo, mostly low socio-economic area in Western Sydney. The High School is co-ed with about 960 students. Post school, the employment prospects for students are very mixed. Many stay around the area. There is significant unemployment as well as gangs, but there is also a small but steady stream of students going on to tertiary education. Camden is part of the Sydney South West region. Juvenile crime in the area is one of the highest in the state.

Spat on

One of my first experiences as a new English teacher was turning up to the bottom English class in year 10. Ninety percent of the class were boys and a substantial number were effectively illiterate. As I walked into the classroom one of the boys spat on me. They didn't know me at all and their hatred was directed at me as an adult and teacher/ authority figure. I was shocked by this experience and tried to talk to them over the next few weeks. I wanted to help them and I wasn't there to hurt them. But basically it meant nothing. I realised that essentially the students, particularly the boys, were angry, disillusioned and distrustful. The girls were not so noticeable as they stood back from the many class confrontations.

I realised that essentially the students, particularly the boys, were angry, disillusioned and distrustful

Over the next few years I developed a life skills approach to English, focusing on survival skills, including reading and writing skills as I worked with a low-achieving all boys class from Year 8 through until the end of Year 10. The heart of it was getting through the anger the boys presented, finding ways to feel good about who they were and then what they were capable of. Many of the activities were outside the classroom and often involved treks, fundraising and other events. This Boys Program became a precursor to the BIF program. We developed a strong rapport and their achievement levels had begun to surprise other staff. The boys were turning into positive young men but at the end of Term 3 in year ten they would all move into other classes and the trial Year 11 program. I knew they were going to have new teachers and more of a mainstream learning environment and I realised they needed a program that was not based on personal rapport with me. The experiments with the Boys Program also taught me that after 14 years old the window of opportunity for change begins to close. After this time it's very difficult to effect positive outlooks. The peer culture is too strong and attitudes entrenched.

Leader training

In Term 4, I offered a selected group of 23 boys (half had been in my English class) training as Peer Leaders. These were the boys we felt had the leadership potential to guide younger boys who were at risk of moving into criminal activity or conduct difficulties. Many of these leaders had been real troublemakers themselves (police records, had fearsome reputations, a lot of hatred for authority, etc.) The training was offered in the Wednesday afternoon sport allocation and focused on the survival and leadership skills they would need to run the program with Year 8 boys. For other reasons the program itself did not kick off until the year after. When the Peer Leaders group reformed, I was unwilling to make the choice about who would be selected. They knew that only 7 or so would go on and actually become leaders. They had to work out who would do the best job with the young boys. They knew they would still be on a learning curve. They also realised how much difference it would have made to them at that age to have someone who cared about them and how they turned out. It became a matter of honour among them to 'walk', to

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actually give up their place as a leader because they knew there was an area which they hadn't yet developed the skills or the commitment. This was usually around issues like homophobia rather than physical stuff.

The program

Twenty Year 8 boys were identified by their Year Advisor, the Welfare Coordinator and the School Counselor. The original criteria were classroom conduct based. The boys were seen as being at risk on a basis of their poor behaviour, bullying or poor attitude. What we hoped to achieve was for the boys to:

- Feel positive about themselves
- Turn away from the criminal path and reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour, youth depression and suicide
- To offer support and help them survive in the school environment
- Have a positive code to live by
- Give them a sense of belonging and community responsibility

The BIF program group has its formal session every Wednesday afternoon during sport (this is a fanatically sport-orientated school). The Year 8 boys are put into teams of 3 or 4 to one leader. The year-long program has three basic components:

1. Getting together as a group, team-building. This usually takes the first term. I also talk to the boys about what BIF is, what we expect from them, the standards of behaviour, about respect, codes of honour and what our codes are in BIF. We know the boys will learn a code somewhere and we want to offer them something positive instead of what they were exposed to at home, on the streets or in gangs.
2. Physical endeavour-based skills: climbing, abseiling, navigation, camping, safety and so on. For this part of the program we began using the facilities and equipment of the Minto/Campbelltown Police Boys Club and now Senior Constable Steve Alchin is a key part of the BIF team. The treks we do are assessments of the skills learned. The leaders watch the boys and I watch them all. We are looking for their commitment to the team, technical ability and individual qualities in communication, problem solving and so on. After the treks we report back as a whole group on what people did or didn't do, how that affected others, what behaviours demonstrated commitment to others and we pay attention to the special qualities which makes us BIF boys.

   We deliberately give them challenging situations to overcome. "Expect surprises" we would say. On one occasion Steve organised a blind and deaf friend of his to come on a 3 day trek. The boys were fantastic, they had to take care of everything.
3. Workshops on personal and social issues: bullying, violence, drugs, personal goals, masculinity, sexuality, relationships and throughout all this the bottom line is understanding about power and value. Power and value comes from the way you make people feel. It could be bad or good. We want them to get addicted to making people feel good. This is how it makes sense afterwards, it's not what we say in the program. We use lots of drama and English-based work from my work over previous years. Again how this is done is more important than any specific content. The content can change but our approach is always the same.

I also talk to the boys about what BIF is, what we expect from them, the standards of behaviour, about respect, codes of honour and what our codes are in BIF

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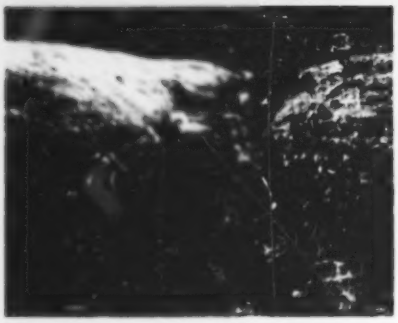

A BIF leader and his team return

Leader support

I am available to the BIF Leaders to discuss particular boys, issues or strategies. I would generally see someone everyday. Mostly this happens at recess or lunch times but often minor problems are sorted out by Greg Benson, the current BIF Senior Leader and I just hear about them afterwards. I also liaise with the staff, school counsellor, year advisor or school executive on issues dealing with the boys. The BIF leadership team figure out what the basic issue is with a boy and find a way to help him. One boy was basically starving as all money was going on drugs, he needed food but not welfare in any sense. Another needed somewhere to hang out. For many things the leaders come up with their own solutions and put them into action, without making a big deal of it. It has to all seem a natural part of what life is about. One leader decided that he would demonstrate his commitment to his team member by sitting with him during every detention and punishment he copped.

Greg's story itself is a revelation and by extension a spur to what might be achieved in a school. He has gone from being a Year 8 'gangster' with a record for arson, car theft and other offenses to a school leader in Year 11. Consider the effect on local crime alone, when someone who was a serious 'case', knocking off 4 Commodores a week, instead holds up and teaches other similar boys by example and mentoring, an ideal of what is important in life and what respect and pride in yourself means in the way you live your life. These older boys are seen as 'cool', they are respected role models and they spend much of their time putting their belief and commitment into action. They take their work seriously.

What happened?

There are a wealth of stories here. The first thing is that the role of leaders is absolutely crucial. The young boys absolutely look up to them. For one boy who was a real handful, we decided that as he had not exhibited any of the behaviours we need as a BIF boy, we would not put him in any team. "We won't drop our standards to make room for you. We want you to raise your standards and take pride in yourself. You will float until one of the leaders decides to accept you in his team". The behaviour change in this boy over the next few weeks was remarkable. He wanted to be found doing the right thing.

There are a wealth of stories here. The first thing is that the role of leaders is absolutely crucial. The young boys absolutely look up to them

There is a positive effect on school culture. For example during the year when the boys program was not operating, the Welfare coordinator and Deputy requested that the boys program be restarted. The amount of problems in the school had significantly increased when the 'troubled' group was not engaged in any program. When they were positively engaged the whole Year level lifted. There is less harassment and peer leaders are also operating in the playground not only for their boys but for others, and if necessary, even turning on boys who are harassing girls in some way. In a case this year, a female colleague was shocked by something she thought she would never see at any school. There was a girl getting harassed by other boys and girls because she didn't fit in. Dave (not his real name) an ex-BIF boy now in Year 9, a natural peer leader (who we suspect wants us to know he carries the ideals of BIF, so he will be considered as a future BIF Leader), knew about this situation. Now, 'no-one messes with Dave'. He went down to the shop and bought a bunch of flowers and brought them back to school. Then in the playground, in front of others, he made a show of giving her the flowers saying he saw how she was being treated. He wanted her to hold her head up high and show she was as good as anyone else and take some pride in who she was. The teacher was thrilled. The boy was taking a stand against the negativity in his year. More importantly the boy was exhibiting behaviour aligned with BIF, months after he'd been in the program.

There are academic outcomes from involving boys in a program like this. Over the years of work with conduct disordered boys in English class, their rank position in English and other exams provided evidence that there were significant improvements in academic outcomes.

We ran the whole school program for a second time in 1999 and many of the original leaders had moved on. We had to go back to square one. Fifteen boys were nominated by staff as leaders: some ratbags, some goody goodies. We ran through the same leadership training process. This year we have both Year 7 and 8 involved because some kids were already turning to undesirable influences in and out of school (e.g. criminal gangs). Next year there will be boys who have been through the program who will reach the stage of being considered for leadership roles in BIF. One indication of the effect of the program is that a significant number of graduate BIF boys have said that what they really want from school is the opportunity to become a BIF leader.

There were a number of unintended outcomes. We did not expect to have any effects on problems occurring at home, but many boys seemed to experience less hassles at home. One parent wrote us a letter, "Thank you for giving me my son back". Another unexpected effect was a flow on to a local gang. After a flock of sheep had been beaten to death in the school Ag. Plot, one ex-Boys Program student who had left school realised who had done it and went to the police. He demonstrated the courage to stand up to a dangerous and threatening gang. The other boys said, "We knew he'd end up in a police station, but we thought he'd be in trouble, not standing up for what he thought was right".

Lessons

Several things have become very clear. You cannot make mistakes with the leader training. They are still learning even after they begin running teams. You can't afford to have leaders who don't live up to what's expected of them. For some of the younger boys it's the first time an older male had shown any affection to them and they respect them.

These leaders are so important and their work is real. Recently, they were away for the Wednesday afternoon and I had the BIF boys to myself. They didn't know me and I had to start from scratch because the normal program didn't work if the leaders weren't there. The boys saw me as not much different from any other teacher - just another authority figure. I'm always improving on the workshops and developing new methods and approaches. Every group carries its different dynamics and I must always remain flexible in my delivery. The important lessons remain the same its just that the method and timing are crucial. So I'm still learning all the time.

At the moment there's no current support for those graduate BIF boys in Year 9. Most seem to settle into a steady rhythm quite well. I'm thinking of organising a camp of current and ex-BIF boys to keep them part of a larger program. Also, I'd like to get some sort of work/ vocational placement program to run alongside BIF so that the boys get some experience of being in the real world of work.

We have to believe that we can do something for even the worst of the boys. Boys you think are the 'scum of the earth' won't show you the truth of what's noble in them, their softness and yearning to be worthwhile because they feel you can do nothing. Until they see you believe in them and that you're not like almost every other adult, they won't show you what they can do. These are not the boys who get their respect from being elite sportsmen or academic achievers. Mentoring is more than being a coach working with the boys who are already good at their sport. These boys are the group who get nothing to hold onto. They are the angry ones, often mistreated in their own families and are likely to end up in trouble and causing serious trouble.

If you are thinking of starting something similar in your school I'd recommend you find a male teacher who is passionate about boys survival: boys for whom getting through school is a survival issue. Then focus on developing life skills and a reason for being proud of themselves.

At this stage materials about the BIF program are in preparation. There is minimal advantage to be gained by visiting the school as the system is largely invisible to visitors. Genuine requests for staff training and workshops will be considered for 2000 only. Send to John Fleming, 44 Organs Rd, Bulli NSW 2516.

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The basis of our work with boys in UK

Trefor Lloyd has been involved in men & boys work for over 16 years. He is based in London and recently presented a keynote address at the 'Working With Boys Building Fine Men' Conference held in Newcastle in July 1999. Here is part of what he had to say.

Trefor Lloyd addressing the conference

I want to start with three quotes. The first is from The Teacher magazine in 1899: *Young boys should be recognised as being in a hoodlum stage of development. Young barbarians to be relinquished by mothers into the care of the father. Never has the boy been quite so wild as now and never have so many cubs been so half orphaned and left a female guidance in school, home and church. Boys need different forms of understanding and different forms of punishment.*

Flogging is a good idea for boys, cuddling for girls. Adolescent male rebellion is necessary and vital. The natural revolution of the young male just beginning to sense his virility against the prim petticoat control to which he has been too much committed.

The comments on women I'm going to leave at the moment. But I think what we have to understand is the context of this quote. This is the teacher magazine - teachers were saying this. This was a time of numerous wars in Britain. We had just pulled out of one and we were just about to move into another. And the context in which these comments were made was that there was a deep concern that boys were not tough enough, strong enough or detached from their emotions enough, to fight a war well. This was a period where concerns about young men were linked with the value of young men. We needed those young men. We needed those young men to fight wars. Numerous questions could be asked about whether the wars really needed to be fought, but we needed the young men to fight the wars once we were in them. And I think there is way in which the context of these comments live on with us now. In some respects we still have views about preparing boys for this sort of environment.

This is from the Parent Magazine in 1939: *There are times when every boy must defend his own right if he is not to become a coward and lose the road to independence and true manhood. The strong willed boy needs no inspiration to combat but often a good deal of guidance and restraint. If he fights more than lets say a half a dozen times a week, except of course during his first week at a new school, he is probably over quarrelsome and needs to curb. The sensitive retiring boy on the other hand needs encouragement to stand his ground and fight.*

This is 1939. No coincidence.

A third for you. This is 1953: *We may say without serious risk of controversy that so long as civilisation fails to civilise war out of the war, boys must understand that their duties as adults may include that of defending their own country, it's freedoms and the rights of other people against violence.*

Now I think some of what we're are trying to deal with is the leftovers of us preparing boys for war, because in part we haven't replaced this thinking with something else. For working class boys we're preparing them for work environments that actually require a similar sort of attitude and view. Certainly not showing your feelings. Certainly not being able to show vulnerability. Now for any of you that do sex education work with boys, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years old, you'll see this in very clear terms. What you require when you're doing sex education is for the young men to be able to listen, reflect and to get involved in content with a strong emotional attachment. Here, on the other hand, is probably some relic of boys having been prepared for war. Do you see what I'm saying? I think these juxtapositions are things we have to work with.

For working class boys we're preparing them for work environments that actually require a similar sort of attitude and view. Certainly not showing your feelings

One of the questions that we are beginning to raise with government in Britain is: what do we want from our young men? What do we want them to do now, if we don't want them to fight wars? Your economic situation is similar to us. Heavy industry is not there. That's the kind of work that we expected our working class men to do. What do we want them to do now?

The basis of our work with boys and young men

Now I want to go through some issues and implications that have come out of the work that we've done over the last sixteen years. We have worked in a number of settings, particularly schools, youth services, criminal justice settings and health settings. We've run countless groups with boys and young men. We have also trained workers in those settings to work effectively with young men. What I'm going to describe now are the basics of the way we work.

Men and masculinity can't be divorced

One of the basic things that we've found is that you can't divorce men from masculinity. If we really want to address issues with boys we can't separate the two. Men have to be thought about within context of how they are socialised as men. We can use the understandings that are around masculinity in the work. Gender blindness has no place now.

Separating gender and sexism

The second thing we've found is that we have to separate the concepts of gender and sexism. Our understanding of sexism is: an institutional reinforcement that women are worse than men, that men are better than women. What gender is, is a description of difference between what men and women do. Now in Britain what we're seeing is incredibly dramatic changes in terms of gender. We will be the first country in Western Europe where the majority of the working population will be female in just two years. Fifty one percent of the working population will be women. A lot of those women will be in part-time and low paid work but in sheer numbers they're the majority of workers. Now the basis of gender stereotypes is that women stay at home. Men go out to work. These are dramatic changes. Whereas what we are seeing is very little change in relation to sexism in Britain. All the indicators of sexism, particularly difference in pay, still exist and in fact they're getting bigger. The levels of violence, all the indicators around sexism suggest that nothing has changed. Women's attitudes may have changed but the actualities of their existence have not.

Men proving they're men

The next basis on which we work is to identify the real problem. Being strong, loud, hairy, going to football, playing sport, being competitive, there's a whole number of things that we've said about what it means to be a man, and we've decided that all of those things are wrong. We need to start looking at whether these attributes are the problem or whether they're problems when men try to prove they're men. There's nothing wrong with being strong. It's something we all strive to be. It's only a problem when you try to prove that you're strong and show everybody else that you're strong. So at the root of a lot of our work with young men is the view that we need to be dealing with men trying to prove they're men. That's where the mess is. That's where the criminal activity often is. That's where the abuse of women often is. Why did you hit her? " Well, she embarrassed me in front of my mates".

We will be the first country in Western Europe where the majority of the working population will be female in just two years

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We never talk about what it means to be a man, and we don't provide those opportunities for young men to think about what it is to be a man

Not a deficit model

Another basis of the way we work is that we can't work with a deficit model. We set up a domestic violence project some years ago to get to men before they'd been hitting their wives on a regular basis. When we said that we were going to set up a phone line for men to ring who felt they had a problem with violence there was more than one of two sniggers. Men going to ring up say "Hey look, I'm having trouble with my violence, I'm hitting her"? It wouldn't happen we were told. But in fact what we got was a lot of calls from men saying "I feel out of control". Now there are men that get to a certain point of having hit a woman to such a degree that it's become part of their makeup. But those men who have hit their wives or partners once or twice usually feel pretty bad about it. If not the fact that they've hit a woman, the fact that they lost control. Now I think the deficit models have often led us to not really grapple with the complexity of men's lives and the motivations that we're dealing with. And I think that leads onto a pretty fundamental social view: can we honestly say that we believe men can change? There does seem to be a prevailing social view now that men are reluctant to change in all cases. They're reluctant to adapt, they're reluctant to think about alternatives. I think that's part of the problem that we often have about young men.

Three young people

We had a wonderful case where we went to talk to family planning clinic staff and we said to them "What do you think when you see three young women come to the door?". And they said "Great, she's brought two mates". And then we said "Well, what do you think when you see three young men come to the door?". And they said "Oh god, we're in trouble". If we start to perceive a problem as young men approach, and react as though they are a problem, it is going to be incredibly difficult for them to deal with us. And I think in this approach is an element of that uncertainty about whether men really can change.

The starting point with young men

The first place where we start with young men is to create as much opportunity as possible for them to reflect and think about what it means to be man. I think for those of you here that are not developing work yet, to make that the basic aim, to create environments where young men can reflect and think about what it means to be a man is a great place to start. It's at the basis of everything that we do. Give the guys an opportunity just to think about it. Because it seems to us that there's something about the fact that it's around us all the time but we never talk about it. We never talk about what it means to be a man, and we don't provide those opportunities for young men to think about what it is to be a man. We have found that the more explicit we are with young men, the more ready they are to talk. The more confident we are that this is the same as talking about the football results, the more able they are to take these opportunities with both hands.

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Lessons from an all-boy Year 8 class

Robin Blackley, Year Level Co-ordinator at Orbost Secondary College, circulated this discussion paper at his school. Orbost is an isolated rural community in East Gippsland, Victoria.

Almost 15 months ago a pilot program for a group of students at risk was launched within this school. The group comprised 17 Year 8 boys, referred to hereafter as Year 8.1.

The program aimed to intervene in a cycle of negative attitudes towards schooling, disruptive behaviour and poor academic progress. The group was based largely in one Home Room to which it had exclusive access, the entire curriculum was to be delivered by four teachers only (as opposed to 11 or 12 in the two other Year 8 groups), and the teaching and learning program was to be tailored to meet the individual needs of each of the students in the group.

The various agenaas of students at risk, boys education, behaviour modification, poor literacy skills and alternative models of curriculum delivery became interwoven and at times, confused

Underpinning the whole program was a pastoral care scheme involving the four classroom teachers and the Year Level Co-ordinator, and a monitoring and evaluation process aimed at seeking feedback from the students and their parents, and responding to their suggestions, comments and concerns.

At the end of Semester One this program was abandoned. The Year 8 classes were largely re-drawn, and teaching allotments were altered accordingly. This action occurred in response to concerns about the program, which were raised by teachers, parents and the 8.1 students themselves.

Looking back

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to identify some of the factors which mitigated against the successful operation of this program. These factors included:

- **Class size:** The class was too large to achieve its objective. A number of students were included to 'make up the numbers' - a political compromise to 'keep the peace' amongst the staff. While the 8.1 class was slightly smaller than the other two Year 8 groups (21/ 22), the number of students in the group was simply too large, given the highly specialised needs of the students within the group.
- **Parent opposition:** The program was presented as more or less of a 'fait accompli' to the parents of the students chosen to be in the 8.1 group. The nature of the program had been conceived late in 1997, and little consultation with parents had occurred. While probably half of the parents involved were either enthusiastic or prepared to 'give it a go', 5 or 6 sets of parents were less than supportive. Their attitudes ranged from cynicism to open hostility. The concerns raised included lack of consultation, lack of gender balance within the group, 'different' curriculum and fear of the influence on their sons of some other members of the group.
- **Program aims:** The overall aims and direction of the program were not articulated clearly enough. The various agendas of students at risk, boys education, behaviour modification, poor literacy skills and alternative models of curriculum delivery became interwoven, and at times, confused. While data collection and identification of the issues to be addressed were well documented, the articulation of a clear program philosophy and process were not nearly so well done. This eventually resulted in only a small number of staff 'owning' the agendas being pursued.

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Some parents expressed concern about how their sons were going to 'integrate back into normal classes' the following year

- **Suspicion of change:** The perception that the 8.1 program was a radical departure from something more 'normal' was widespread. Students, parents and some staff were innately mistrustful of an alternative model of curriculum delivery. Some parents expressed concern about how their sons were going to 'integrate back into normal classes' the following year. Some of the students argued passionately that they should be doing the same 'work' as the other Year 8's. Ironically, they also commented that a lot of this work was boring, far too difficult for some, and heavily reliant upon sitting in a desk and writing. The notion that curriculum is static, sequential and able to be administered in carefully measured doses was evident in the attitudes of some staff, who asked how students could possibly cope in Year 9 after having 'missed out' on a whole year of 'their subject'.

As a consequence of these pressures, the 8.1 program was modified significantly from that which had been originally conceived. In essence, the eventual program became not much more than a watered down version of the standard Year 8 curriculum at Orbost Secondary College (OSC). Herein probably lay the most fundamental flaw in the whole venture.

Some successes

Yet, despite these obstacles and notwithstanding the fact that the program was eventually abandoned at the end of Semester One, a number of important successes and achievements were able to be identified. The legacy of the 8.1 program will not simply be that of a memory of an 'experiment gone wrong'.

Most importantly, the issue of catering for the needs of all students (and especially those at risk) was identified, debated and acted upon. The data gathered in the course of mounting the 8.1 concept identified some alarming trends - high failure rates in many subject areas, a huge disparity between the achievement levels of boys and girls, very low literacy levels amongst a significant percentage of boys, and a failure to modify the behaviour of a small but significant number of individual students. These issues remain firmly on the agenda for consideration by the administration, the teaching staff and the College Council.

Probably half the boys in the group made significant progress. One student commented on his evaluation sheet that this was the first time at high school that he had been presented with work that he could actually do. Several sets of parents commented on their disappointment at the 8.1 program terminating and on their fears that their sons being returned to a mainstream program would undo a lot of the progress achieved in the first six months of the year.

There is no doubt that the behaviour, self-confidence and academic achievement of a number of the boys in the group showed a dramatic improvement. Survey results, objective testing and school reporting procedures bear testimony to this. Furthermore, the quality of the relationships of co-operation and trust established between some of the students in the group and the teaching staff has continued to endure beyond the life of the program. Almost without exception, the group of students for whom these observations would hold true are those who could be broadly categorised as the very weak students in the group - those who had typically failed to cope with the expectations of a traditional curriculum.

The 8.1 program established a number of positive precedents which have, or may in the future, be taken up by other programs, groups or individuals. The concept of monthly newsletters to parents, informing them of specific curriculum programs and objectives was very well received. The Oral Reading Program (in which 17 boys in groups of one or two read with 10 teachers for half an hour a week) was a major success. Involvement in community programs like Meals on Wheels will continue to occur.

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The composition of the group (all boys) appeared to foster (amongst a significant number of the students) boisterous behaviour, an increase in the use of bad language and a predisposition towards vandalism

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the concept of gathering detailed data on each student, and then tailoring each individual student's learning program to capitalise upon the strengths and build up the weaknesses identified in the data, is a methodology guaranteed to produce better outcomes.

The problems

While recognising these achievements, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that the program ran into insurmountable difficulties, resulting in its eventual abandonment. These difficulties included:

- *Resentment by many of the students at* being identified as 'different' by other students and by some staff and parents.
- Failure to take pride in the Home Room. Students saw themselves as 'locked away' from the rest of the school, and some resorted to 'trashing' the room in order to make their point.
- The composition of the group (all boys) appeared to foster (amongst a significant number of the students) boisterous behaviour, an increase in the use of bad language and a predisposition towards vandalism, both within the Home Room and outside in the yard.
- Two or three sets of parents actively campaigned against the program, and succeeded in spreading cynicism, mistrust and negativity amongst some other parents.
- The deteriorating behaviour of a number of the boys in the group placed great strain upon some of the key staff working in the program.
- Most importantly, and for reasons that will probably never be fully articulated or understood, the program failed to attract the support of the whole staff. While many were initially happy to see the 'naughty boys' removed 'out of sight and out of mind' to the 8.1 Home Room, the difficulties which subsequently emerged were never 'owned' by the entire staff.

Back to the future

Nearly twelve months on, the warning signs which gave rise to the 8. 1 program still continue to manifest themselves. More recent data than that presented in the initial 8.1 discussion paper indicates that some patterns have remained constant. For example:

- Girls continue to outperform boys in almost all areas of the curriculum
- Boys continue to be grossly over-represented in the Time Out, detention and suspension statistics.

1998 Suspensions	*Boys* 51 suspensions (27 boys suspended) *Girls* 18 suspensions (15 girls suspended)
1999 Suspensions (Term 1 only)	*Boys* 15 suspensions *Girls* 0 suspensions
1999 Time Outs (Term 1 only)	14 Boys Timed out 1 Girl Timed out

- Literacy testing indicates a high percentage of boys in the lowest achievement levels
- 50% of all suspensions in 1999 have been of boys in the 8.1 group in 1998
- Over 50% of all Time outs in 1999 have been of boys in the 8.1 group
- However, 50% of all 8.1 boys either suspended or sent to Time out in 1998 have not 're-offended ' to date this year.

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It is also the case that a significant number of the students who comprise this group are some of our Koori students

Where to next?

Analysis of the suspension, time out and co-ordinators' detention statistics indicates that to this point, there have been fewer instances of all three events than there were, at the equivalent point in the year, in either 1997 or 1998. It could reasonably be argued that one of the factors contributing to this pattern might be the impact made on some students by the 8.1 program. However, these figures on their own do not provide anything like a complete picture. There are serious issues of absenteeism and truancy, and of failure to satisfactorily complete courses of study amongst a significant number of students in both Years 9 and 10. While the boys are again over-represented, these are not 'boys only' issues.

Disenchantment with schooling is therefore being reflected in a number of ways. While it is certainly true that the needs of the vast majority of our students are being met by a rich and diverse curriculum which offers many opportunities, a small but significant group (perhaps as many as 5%) continue to make little or no progress, to reject the curriculum which is on offer, and to manifest behaviours which give cause for serious concern. It is also the case that a significant number of the students who comprise this group are some of our Koori students.

Bluntly put, our programs simply do not meet the needs of these students who, unless offered some viable alternative, will either fall out of school or be forced out.

It is the responsibility of schools to provide for the needs of all of their students, so clearly, an alternative program which attempts to retain these students within the school system must be mounted.

Investigations to this point have revealed the possibility of access to a range of funding sources established to support programs for students at risk. These include the Full Service Schools program, the 'Extra Edge' program, AASPA programs and VET programs. The services of additional personnel also need to be actively sought, and enquiries about the acquisition of access to buildings and facilities beyond the immediate environment of Orbost Secondary College need to be made.

A small group of OSC staff has completed some preliminary discussions and has formulated a draft proposal for consideration by the rest of the school community. The program could involve the following components:

- A Work Experience day where students would work either individually or in small teams under the supervision of a local employer.
- A Vocational Education Training day, where students would participate in a VET course appropriate for their needs and interests. Possibilities include placement in any of Automotive, Hospitality, Sport and Recreation, Maritime Services, Information Technology, Retail and Agriculture and Horticulture courses.
- A day of activities supervised by non-school personnel (although the school may provide some additional support). Tasks would include working on a community health project, working on an enterprise project, working on a production task (for example, constructing a surfboard), attending job interviews, counseling sessions, and completing any follow-up work associated with either Work Experience or the VET courses.
- Two days a week of conventional schooling within classrooms at OSC. The curriculum would be geared heavily towards the completion of work requirements in English and Mathematics, with students studying only one or two additional units.

It is envisaged that aspects of this program may begin as early as Week 5 of Term

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2, but the more likely starting date for the complete program might be Term 3. Between now and then, a number of administrative and operational matters need to be attended to. These include:

- Decisions about the size and composition of the group (current thinking suggests between 8 and 10 students)
- Selection criteria for individual students
- The inclusion of girls in the program
- Completion of applications for funding from a variety of agencies
- Establishment of a formal management structure
- Employment of a program supervisor
- Clarification of financial arrangements and the determination of a more precise operational budget
- Consultation with prospective students and their parents
- Consultation with the OSC teaching staff responsible for the school-based component of this program
- Negotiation with potential employers and VET providers
- Acquisition of appropriate buildings for delivery of the component (at this stage) loosely referred to as 'activities'.
- And there are probably a number of others

It is entirely likely that there may be some overlap between participants in the 8.1 program and prospective participants in this new program. The patterns of behaviour which caused so much concern in 1997 and which gave rise to the 8.1 program in 1998 are, for a small number of students, just as easily identifiable and, given the students' ages, even more alarming than they were back in 1997.

However, many important lessons were learnt from the 8.1 venture, and these can hopefully be turned to the advantage of the participants in the 1999 program. Despite the setbacks and the failures of last year, the school must not abandon its students at risk of early departure from the schooling system. It must continue to strive to provide relevant, rewarding, challenging and viable programs for all of its students.

Robin reports that Orbost Secondary College has just conducted its triennial review and most of the recommendations of the discussion paper have been adopted. The underachievement of boys is likely to be a high priority within the next school Charter.

Despite the setbacks and the failures of last year, the school must not abandon its students at risk of early departure from the schooling system

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Making the transition from of boyhood to manhood

Nigel Pizzini is a Guidance Counsellor at Waitakere College, Auckland, NZ. Here he describes an event celebrating a group of boys stepping into manhood.

...our value is in who we are, not what we can do

As part of the 'end of year programme' at school, the opportunity arose to go camping with a group of seven 15 year old boys for four days. They planned and organised everything; I just tagged along adding some input in the evenings, trying out some ideas on how to provide an opportunity for young men to make their claim to manhood.

The first night

The evening was beautiful and clear. We sat around a roaring campfire. After a time of swapping jokes and telling stories, I presented the following questions:

- If you had a magic wand, what would you like to change about yourself? Your family? The world?
- What qualities do you value in these other young men here?

About themselves, they spoke of past actions and decisions they now regret, changes they want to make in their attitude and effort in school work (next year brings their first formal national exams) and their role in their family. I was moved in the sharing about family changes - one boy spoke ruefully about the influence of alcohol on his father and older siblings, another wished his Dad didn't have so many women. Many spoke passionately about the impact in the world of racism and inequality of wealth. They wanted people to live in peace with each other, without violence, oppression or poverty. The boy's represented an existing friendship group and knew each other well. When it came to the qualities each valued in the others, they spoke of the contribution each makes to the group, valuing highly humour, caring for others, and being unselfish. Sporting abilities, muscular strength, and group preserving skills (e.g.: 'help us sort out arguments') were also greatly valued.

We had a great time of sharing and at the end, when asked their reflections on the day, many said the highlight was 'That talking stuff around the fire, because we got to hear what others thought and felt'.

The second night

The second evening featured misty rain, so all eight of us squeezed together into one small tent with a candle in the middle. The boys wondered if we were having a séance! They were keen to talk and share jokes and ghost stories. I told the story of Iron John and then invited them to participate in a guided visualisation. It was a journey to meet a Wise Old Man. They held a conversation with this figure, received a gift and asked one parting question, before they returned to the tent and shared their experience.

Most of the group was fully engaged in the journey, visualising the images offered, and sensing the dialog with the Wise Old Man. Many were visibly moved by the experience and recounted powerful stories of their encounter. The Wise Old Man appeared like Yoda (from Star Wars fame), an old Martial Arts master (a la Karate Kid movies), an ancient ancestor, or a deceased Grandparent. The conversations were reassuring, encouraging and challenging. The boys told of messages about taking their place in the world and their family with more consciousness to make it a better place.

One particular boy's experience of the gift stands out powerfully. It was a Samurai sword, a highly prized Martial Arts possession. This lad has an extensive background in Martial Arts and was totally baffled by this gift. 'Why are you giving this to me? I don't deserve this!' he exclaimed. But the Wise Old Man only insisted 'You've earnt it!' We talked about what this might mean. I felt that one meaning in the Wise Old Man's message was he (the boy) earns the gift not by what he does or achieves but by who he is. That is, our value is in who we are, not what we can do!

I was thrilled and greatly encouraged to witness how powerfully young men can engage in this sort of 'soul experience'. For the rest of the camp a frequent request was for another guided visualisation or for time to return to 'my Wise Old Man'.

The third day

The whole day was focused towards a ritual, to be held that evening. Each boy spent two hours alone and in silence, contemplating his departure from 'Childhood' and entrance to 'Manhood'. They found symbols of manhood which were shared on their return and crafted the statements to be spoken in the ritual. Each boy will say something about childhood they are leaving behind and what that has meant to them and something about the manhood they are stepping into and what that means to them.

Each boy spent two hours alone and in silence, contemplating his departure from 'Childhood' and entrance to 'Manhood'

Objects offered as symbols included:

- Rocks - speaking of the solidness and strength of manhood.
- A leaf which showed the vein structure - how a man draws strength from family and community and moves out in different directions to support activity and other people.
- A feather - the covering and protection for a family.

I explained an object I brought with me - a pendent on a leather thong: The four quadrants represent four archetype energies of masculinity (King, Warrior, Lover, and Magician) and Ying-Yang in the centre represents balance between these archetype energies, also balance between the opposites of polarised thought: strength-softness, confidence-vulnerability, thought-feeling, and so on.

Later that night the ritual was staged. I gave each a pendent, the symbol I shared with them earlier. Many of the group speak of the valued treasure this pendant has become.

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The important thing is that young men are recognised, accepted and received by adult men they trust and respect, as being an equal

On the last day

On the final day the 'New Men' spontaneously acted out a 'slaying of the King'. Usurping the power or strength of the Lead Male - in other words, gave me a good going over! Not in the physically aggressive way they have with each other, featuring full on punches, dead legs and WWII moves, but an 'overpowering' achieved by share numbers, smothering with a sleeping bag and taping legs and arms into positions of submission. It took several minutes of desperate struggle and conscious mind calming to get free. They had proven to themselves that truly we are equal! (and a physio proved to me that massage works!).

We all returned home much wiser than when we left. I detected a new dignity and sense of responsibility among the young men. They have a sense that the rest of their life is up to them. How it will be, the sort of person they become and contribution they make, rests in their care. I felt their confidence also, knowing that they don't stand alone, that there is a community of men they can tap in to if they seek it and nurture the sharing and 'coming together' we experienced on this camp.

I look forward to ongoing contact with this group of brave, soulful young men, an enjoyable benefit of being on site at their school. I have great hopes for their future and will watch it with much interest. I will also be interested in their reflections of this experience once school begins again in February. I wonder what they make of it with the distance two months provides? I wonder if they experience themselves differently? See the world differently? Experience their education and place in their family, peer group, community differently? Interesting conversations to be had!

What about you?

This has been about a vision and experience I risked to take. What about you? Are you male? If so, you share this responsibility. Do you know and have contact with young men 14,15,16 years old? Do you have a son, nephew, neighbour, friends' son? Could you take this young man, a small group of such young men, on a similar journey? How big or small you do it, does not matter. The important thing is that young men are recognised, accepted and received by adult men they trust and respect, as being an equal - as having crossed the threshold between 'childhood' and 'manhood' and that this is celebrated!

Have fun.

Conversations on the edge of manhood

- What have you enjoyed about being a child? What memories, good times have there been?
- What do you look forward to leaving behind?
- What does being an adult man mean to you? How/what will be different? What will you need to leave behind?
- What will you do differently?
- What worries you about being an adult man? How will you deal with that?
- What sort of man do you want to become? How will that be for others around you?
- What do you want for your life as an adult? How will you ensure this happens?
- What will you enjoy the most about being an adult. What won't you enjoy? How will you manage that?
- Who/what will support you as an adult man?
- What will you biggest challenge be as an adult?
- What stands in the way of you being "adult" at the moment? How will that be overcome?
- Who have your teachers of manhood been? What have you learnt from them?
- What sort of teachers, companions guide's will you need as an adult? How could you get them?

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A dad in the shed

Mentoring boys in work ethic, in a simulated business and in work experience

Geoff Bartlett talks about the Skilling Through Enterprise Program (STEP) in Geraldton, an isolated coastal city in Western Australia.

Building a table setting

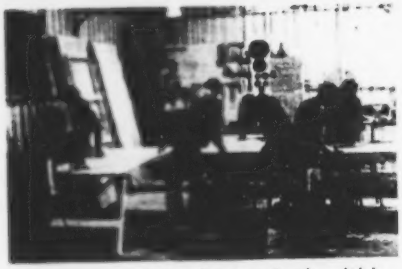
Initially conceived by Glen Diggins and pioneered at John Willcock Senior High School in 1993, the Skilling Through Enterprise Program (STEP) is now offered from Geraldton Secondary College. The College is a co-ed Yr 8 - 12 school of 2000 students formed by the recent amalgamation of the two local high schools. STEP is a course only available to Year 11 students. It was developed to engage students, particularly boys, to mature and develop as individuals within the context of training or employment in trades.

The STEP vocational course has been from the outset unorthodox. The course itself is practical and appropriate for students either undecided on a particular trade career or wishing to skill up further and get a job. It incorporates features introduced by staff in what they intuitively believed was 'best practice' for kids for whom the traditional academic program was unsuitable. The course involves:

- students joining a school based enterprise 'STEP Construction And Hire' that makes quality fabricated products for sales and hire. There is 'profit sharing' of proceeds, that is the money is recycled to students through them being able to buy equipment and tools for the course. It also pays for social events for the students.
- off-timetable delivery from a well equipped and dedicated vocational centre. The program is not restricted to a school timetable. The structure is flexible and involves 2 days academic and 2 days in the enterprise workshop. The workshop component involves two staff working with 15 boys.
- structured work based learning or work experience one day per week. For example one boy installs satellite dishes for a TV service company.
- TAFE training courses and national broad based units offered within the program
- an adult 'ethos' and learning through activity.
- continuous emphasis on developing a strong work ethic in a team situation.

We also focus on multi-trade skilling, computer processing skills, job seeking skills and networking, citizenship and manners, Senior First Aid certificate training, a formal alcohol and drug awareness course, self-esteem enhancement and confidence building.

In STEP we are interested in firstly the social development and citizenship of students and secondly their employability and skill levels. Given the local economy there are not a lot of jobs in the area. Anecdotally we hear of STEP students getting work and we will be conducting a longitudinal survey of outcomes from the program.



The boys reach trade standards within a year

Who comes?

Although girls are welcomed, STEP attracts boys exclusively and currently operates two teams of 15 students (this is the maximum allowed in the TAFE Welding course). These boys span the ability spectrum and traditionally include some very capable students, others with ADHD, ethnic Cocos-Malay, Aboriginal and often a person with a physical or intellectual handicap. They are encouraged to bond, team and to accept each other. When it first started the program had an image that it was for the boys who were going nowhere. This has changed and now students with above average ability are enrolling.

What made the difference?

It was a combination of factors. Students began to see the course as a pathway to something, not just a dead end. For the Year 10 subject selections I put together a set of photos of the things the boys were producing and selling. One was of the float in the annual 'Sunshine Festival Parade' that the boys had built. They were not making models in the workshops, it was the real thing and they were running a business. On top of that they were out in the workplace one day a week. Word of mouth was also important as the boys told others about what it was like.

Once more capable boys began taking the course they become role models for others in social areas as well as practical skills

The change in staff perception was vital. The teams initially began detailing cars, then building BBQs, roasting spits, trestle tables, and hiring them out to staff functions. Staff saw them in projects around the school and saw them maturing. The community then became aware of the program through the products distributed across the Mid West. Education Office staff would take STEP pamphlets around to schools in the region and the boys would fill orders, for example, for the wooden blocks used in maths programs in primary schools. Gradually STEP became known for the quality of products sold and hired out to the community. There is now recognition from the whole school that the course has value.

Once more capable boys began taking the course they become role models for others in social areas as well as practical skills. We deliberately use boys to train each other as it builds their confidence and self esteem.

What makes it work?

The three-way partnership between staff, students and parents is crucial. This begins with the introductory interview in Year 10 where parents and boys meet with staff to discuss the particular ways STEP operates and what is required of them. They are expected to sign an agreement and we go through things like attendance, dress and attitude. One of our primary responsibilities is to employers for the one day a week work experience. If boys are not turning up or have a poor work ethic then the employer can't afford to keep them on. So we also cover the habits that might get in the way of meeting their commitments, such as drug use, hobbies, late nights and so on. We tell them they'll get a reference at the end of the year on the sorts of things that employers are looking for. Parents often comment on the program being so different from their experiences at school and invariably say they wish such courses had been available to them.

The course is delivered by experienced and committed male staff. Each of the two groups has a teacher-team leader who teaches all subjects across the academic and trade curriculum. That means we can integrate English, Maths, Trade and Life Skills into all appropriate lesson situations and extend on to the Work Experience through teacher visits to work sites. This promotes deeper personal relationships with each student as well as enhanced commitment from staff. Workshop sessions are run with 2 staff, the teacher-leader and the workshop supervisor. This means we can split the team up and work on more complex tasks and reach industry standards. They are able to reach trade standards within one year due, in part to having two teachers on hand in all practical sessions (2 complete days per week for each group). These two staff are basically all the boys see during their on site hours. I believe the mentoring role by an adult male is significant to the program.

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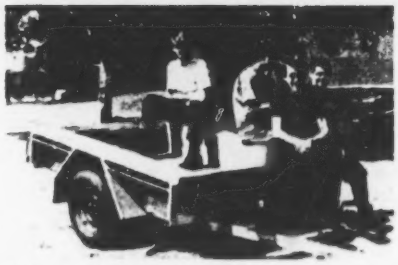

Not a model but the real thing

About 20% of the boys have no male figure at home. If you are interested in doing something similar in your school, make sure you get the right staff involved. Those with a passion for it.

The boys have a home base and they take pride and ownership in it. Many of them come to school early, at 8.00 am. A large new metal shed is used for industrial work and is sited next to a demountable classroom on the College site. From profits and funding requests the shed is now totally equipped with power tools, welders, lathes and assorted machines. All benches, storage racks, fittings etc. have been built by students as practical exercises. These facilities are only used by STEP students and in this sense are all dedicated. The teams have worked with staff on developing the separate physical facility of the sub-school and also work on a total landscape plan for the surrounding area. This involves paving, limestone walls, pergolas, painting, planting etc. and is an established mid-term goal.

The boys learn to value themselves by virtue of the quality products they help design and fabricate. Apart from items constructed for themselves personally, they produce goods for use and hire within the school and the community. These include table settings, trestle tables, sets for school plays, playground equipment, trailers and large pre-fabricated playground maze complexes. Students are also involved in design, marketing and invoicing of goods and services. Customer service is important. There are phones in the workshop and all boys are expected to answer them. This is part of their assessment. The boys ring though when they know they are going to be away just like a workplace. This is all part of the adult ethos of the school.

The boys learn to value themselves by virtue of the quality products they help design and fabricate

A flat management structure operates for teachers involved in STEP and the administration has devolved considerable responsibility to the area. This empowerment is valued and staff find teaching in STEP very fulfilling. These features co-incidentally, are middle school philosophies. Administrative belief in the program has been critical including financial support. The P&C has also raised funds for us. There is a work experience co-ordinator and the boys with learning difficulties use support services in the school. The Aboriginal Support Committee from both the community and within the school have been very strong supporters.

There is also inter-agency community involvement with STEP. Individuals from these agencies network to assist with drug and alcohol education, job seeking and first aid. This adds to a flow of visitors to the sub-school and in most weeks a past STEP graduate would also visit spontaneously to chat with staff and students. The boys respond well to them.

"Attendance has always been through the roof".

Over the past seven years, parent, community and student acceptance and endorsement have been most positive. The STEP vehicle depends on developing trust with students through a 'dad-in-the-shed' relationship. They respond with rapid improvements in attendance patterns and noticeable maturity leaps. They take personal responsibility for achievement and ownership of their sub-school, and are happy to wear a customised and personal adaptation of the school uniform identifying them as STEP trainees.

Boys come from around the district from Dongera, Northhampton and outlying areas, as well as the Cocos Islands (6000 km offshore). Despite this there is a sense of identity among the boys. Aboriginal boys make up 11%. The Cocos Islanders are Moslem and bring a different perspective to group discussions. One of the Cocos boys said he heard about the course from an ex-student back on the Islands.

Not all boys pass the academic component of the course. We do give certificates of completion to them for school-based components. Others get credit points towards achieving secondary graduation from the Curriculum Council of WA, which is run over Year 11 & 12 two years. Some boys stay on in Year 12 but most leave and try to get work, or go into pre-Apprenticeships in TAFE. Some gain employment while they're still on the course. The single most important part is work experience. Quite often boys are offered employment.

More recently we have realised that so much of the mode of operation of STEP is in accord with what is now being recognised publicly as 'best practice' for example in the writings of Steve Biddulph. The interesting thing is that much of this practice was arrived at intuitively from student feedback and the notions of experienced staff throughout the seven years of development.

There has been widespread acceptance and support of this program and many testimonies from parents and students who feel STEP changed, sometimes dramatically, the course of their lives.

."Darryl has grown up so much this year" (Parent)

"Unhappy kids become happy. One boy with learning difficulties that never really fitted in anywhere, loves it. He's achieving, he belongs to a group where bullying is not just ignored and there's his relationship to the team leader."
(Guidance Officer)

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The machismo project

Linking boys with professional artists and turning them on to creative arts.

Rollo Browne talks to Marie-Anne Maakrun, about the work that she and Stephanie Brown are doing to empower boys to express themselves, challenging male stereotypes and building community in the process.

Boys learning the moves in Body Percussion workshop

James Cook Boys' Technology High School is an all boys school of 500 students in Sydney's South. It is in a low to middle class area with 80% of students from a non-English speaking background, a large proportion of whom are of Macedonian descent. School numbers are in general decline because of the changing demographics in the area. The school culture is typical of many boys' state high schools: low academic achievement, steady levels of truancy and bullying and the usual range of anti-social behaviour problems. The school has historically prided itself on its sporting achievements.

Why did you put this project together?

Last year Stephanie Brown, Head Teacher Creative Arts, planned a public event showcasing dance and performance. Called "Cooks Culture", it was designed around the multicultural identity of the boys. Students across all years came together to showcase their own cultures through performance and cuisine. Critics laughed at the project, predicting it wouldn't get 25 people to attend. Instead the school community shocked itself. Some 2,500 people turned up to see 120 boys across all year groups performing, including the school football team. One of the football team, a Year 12 Samoan student, was also a member of Stephanie's art class and he encouraged the rest. Once the football team were known to be singing and dancing, other boys got involved.

After that we knew we could get boys to perform. We wanted to offer the boys something outside the normal school program. We knew that many boys were not getting much out of school, had low self esteem and not much confidence in their abilities. As an issue in boys' education their under-involvement in creative arts meant that the usual macho forms of self expression would be in sport and on the playground in the traditional limited male stereotype. We hoped performance might have an impact on building a more positive identity as well as point some boys towards employment opportunities in the arts field. We wanted to lift the image and morale of the school and its community as well as promote multicultural education. If it worked there could even be improvement in academic outcomes.

What did you do?

We organised male artists to run workshops and get involved with boys. These had to occur in school time, and be self funding. The first workshops started in April this year. Some ran for 1 hour, others over 3 days (one day per week). Costs varied between $1.50 (Indonesian gamalan) and $20 (Animation) depending on the topic and leader. Some groups like 'Mime-o-rama' came to the school purely to perform and we charged $2 each for that.

We put together a list of dynamic professional artists in dance, drama, art, music, sculpture, film and literature. The selection of suitable artists was vital. We could tell quite early on if they saw the significance of what we were trying to do. Many realised their role as mentors and role models and related to the boys experience of being bullied and ridiculed for their creativity. We got some big names involved like George Gittoes, Martin Sharp (to redesign the front entrance), and the sculptor, Richard Goodwin. There have been over 50 workshops now, including:

Year 7 boys hanging in Aerial performance workshop

- Aerial Performance with Gavin Wild (Stunts for Mission Impossible 2)
- Filmmaking with 'Race Around The World' filmmakers John Thiris, Daniel Marsden and Finton Mahoney
- Computers and Music with Bill Nielson
- Tap and Body Percussion with Glenn Wood
- Flamenco Dance with El Duende
- Circus Skills with The Leaping Loonies
- Indonesian Gamelin with Suhandi
- Singing with Stewart Davis

The workshops were offered to all boys (K - 12 and TAFE & Uni students) in the local area during Terms 2 and 3 and will end in a large public performance on September 13 based on a circus theme. There are over 100 boys performing (50 from our school) as well as 20 in the backstage crew.

Among the senior boys a number are realising the career possibilities and have begun re-engaging with school in a more purposeful way

Workshop attendance varied from 10 in Cartooning to 50 in Singing and in Dance. In a busy week we would have 8 - 10 workshops and about 80 boys involved, not all from our school. Other schools could bring their students over for the workshops.

How did you get so many into dance in a boys school?

We designed it to appeal to boys. We called it Body Percussion. We made the workshops available to anyone in the school and told them about it at assemblies. We asked a couple of the young 'cool' male teachers to volunteer for things like Flamenco Dance and when that was known other boys came too. We found that we picked up boys who'd done dance earlier but had given it up because of being bullied and teased about it.

Boys came to us and signed up for workshops. It worked a bit like an in-school excursion. We organised the rooms and the list of class absentees for relevant teachers. The boys realised they were not excused from normal classroom work and had to make up for lost periods. So far there have been no complaints from teachers.

We did also target a small number of boys who were unhappy at school, mainly senior boys and tried to get them involved. We made some places available to them at no charge and all of these were taken up. They came away saying they had enjoyed the experience. Lam was one of them (see story below).

What has been the effect of the program so far?

It has been amazing. We've had parents coming to thank us, lots of letters saying their sons were happier, communicating more at home. One father even hugged Stephanie at the Parent Teacher night with tears in his eyes for "returning his son to him". We have been surprised at the positive impact on so many boys even if it's the sheer fun of it. Something interesting and fun is happening at school and it's going on week after week. Among the senior boys a number are realising the career possibilities and have begun re-engaging with school in a more purposeful way. However it is still too early to tell if this will translate into increased number in creative arts subjects in the school.

The level of harassment in the school appears to be changing. Boys who used to get picked on in the playground are holding their heads up higher. Especially those in the Aerial Performance group, who have been together for about six Monday afternoons now. They are even dressing better. The mood in the playground is better. For the first time I've seen boys practicing dance steps in the playground.

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While it is too early to see any effect in academic performance, a number of teachers are commenting that the boys' behaviour is more settled, even boys known as behaviour problems. One teacher reported how shocked she was at the level of conversation she had with one boy whom she had been teacher for the last four years. He had been a social outcast but is now the leader of the group involved in filmmaking.

We surveyed the students and teachers on the effect of the workshops. Of the boys involved 72% said they felt a positive change in attitude towards being in school. Interestingly 97% who took part in workshops on Wednesday afternoons (usually sport) would normally have truanted sport or gone reluctantly. In terms of truancy, students would turn up specifically to take part in their workshop. Almost all teachers (97%) who attended noticed a positive change in attitude of students towards them.

As part of our evaluation we also looked at some students who took part in one or more Machismo workshops. Here are three cases (not their real names).

Lam is a Year 12 boy of Chinese background living with his divorced father and a brother, Although his father expects academic success, Lam has poor literacy, no interest in sport and truants regularly. He has a past history of hard drug use and involvement in crime. He is however highly talented artistically. He attended all the cartooning and animation workshops where his talents were recognised by the professional artists concerned. Lam has seen the possibility of a career path and can see a future whereas he did not see one before. He shows greater self-esteem and more confidence socialising with others.

Simon is an introverted, shy and ungainly Year 9 student. He is unhappy at home and in school and shows poor socialisation skills. He is a low achiever who puts in only an average academic performance. Simon attended all the aerial performance workshops and as a result showed improved coordination. In addition he displayed leadership qualities in the group and there was a marked change in his appearance and attitude. His father noticed the positive impact on his family relationships and Simon shows greater confidence in the playground.

Kris is an Year 11 student of Indian background who moves between divorced parents. He has an angry violent temper, poor academic achievement and a very high truancy rate. He is on his last warning at school before 'Position Declared Vacant'. He attended all singing workshops and has led the choir. He was chosen by the artist as the most talented in the group. His social skills improved and he expressed a desire to remain in performance even if no longer attending school.

What makes it work?

It has a lot to do with the calibre of the artists on the program. They make such a difference when they get involved with the boys. The length of time over which the workshops were offered was important. It gave the boys the opportunity to warm up to the excitement of it. "Machismo" is now cool. So many things are available and quite cheap. Some boys brag about what they've done and others are wanting to get involved. Boys are talking about it in class and their teachers are getting curious.

It has a lot to do with the calibre of the artists on the program. They make such a difference when they get involved with the boys

We wanted our work to be visible and attract publicity and community interest. The media coverage, locally and on TV certainly helped make a positive impact on the boys and again lifted the morale of staff. The big performance extravaganza itself was designed with than in mind. One of our other projects was a working bee to change the face of the school. This involved some of our name artists like Martin Sharp and Richard Goodwin. We repainted the front door and walls, put up large reproductions of famous artworks done on tiles, and redid the fountain in mosaic at the front of the school. There's a huge pop-art version of Captain Cook. It's often hard to get teachers to give up their weekend but some 12 staff got involved.

The flexibility of the program is a key feature. It can be adapted to the culture of any school and activities designed to appeal to boys and get them involved. The number of students that have taken part is over 1200. The fact that it's boys only is also crucial. There are few putdowns as only those who want to will come. Boys say things like, "We wouldn't be able to relax and be ourselves if girls were there".

Although the whole program is known as "Machismo", we don't push or talk about the masculinity angle, male identity and what it means to be a man, with the boys. Some of the artists might in their workshops but the main focus is on expression, skills and fun. The whole program itself is a challenge to male stereotypes so we don't need to talk about it. We want to mainstream creative expression in boys and build a community where it is acceptable to be involved, not get self conscious about it.

Marie-Anne Maakrun and Stephanie Brown would be delighted to share their enthusiasm. The program was showcased on The Arts Show on ABC in August and the final performance will be shown on The 7.30 Report. Machismo is planned to run in other venues across Australia next year. Contact them at James Cook Boys' High School on ph (02) 9587 1770 or fax (02) 9553 8242).

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Invasion games

Rollo Browne talks to Pip Woodward, Head of Sport and PE at Howick College, Auckland, New Zealand about the use of games and dance in PE to challenge the traditional link between masculinity and sport.

Making it safe for boys. "This is what you do. This is when you do it".

The new NZ curriculum is based on the notion of "Hauora", a Maori word meaning total wellbeing

Tell us about your school

Howick College is a coed school with 2000 students in east Auckland, a high socio-economic area on the coast (decile 10 in the socio-economic status rating used for government funding in NZ). The number of Asian students is now over a third and growing. Racial tension is quite low. We have 5 one hour lessons a day. Most students have 2 PE lessons a week and, except for Year 10 (Year 9 in Australia) who have 1 Health lesson a week. Health is done in semester blocks.

What's going on?

I've been a Sport/ PE teacher for a long time and had always assumed that kids naturally learn to get on and tolerate each other, particularly in sport. What's different is that now I want to make sure that this happens. PE is changing so that it's not so skill based and it now includes more social and community focus in our understanding of health. The new NZ curriculum is based on the notion of "Hauora", a Maori word meaning total wellbeing. There are four streams: Healthy Living, Motor Skills, Relationships with Other People, and Community and Environment. This year we got some funding to trial the new curriculum and release time to write it up. So far it has gone well.

What did you do?

We developed a number of activities around invasion games to focus on Communication, Fair Play, and Celebrating Difference in Year 9 (Year 8, Australia). These are the units in within Stream C (Relationships with Others). Invasion games are all those games where teams defend their own territory and mount attacks on opponents' territory to score points. Our PE classes are single sex, usually between 22 and 30 students.

For the unit on communication I might start with a simple warm up game around eye contact called "Hey". This is for both boys' and girls' classes. The group stands in a circle and we all choose a person on the other side to be our partner. We hang our heads down and on the count of three we look up at either the person on our left, right or the partner across the circle. If you make eye contact you go "Hey", otherwise you remain silent. I tell the kids to choose before they look.

Then we play a version of netball in teams of 6, *without talking*. The idea is to pass the ball four times to four different people on your team without interception. After four successful passes they touch the ball on the ground for one point and the ball goes to the other team. If they lose control of the ball, again it is handed over to the other team. The students referee themselves. If they do call out there's no penalty. The boys initially find this hard and they get frustrated. I stop the game and ask them how else they can communicate without talking, such as by clapping or waving. After about 10 minutes, I bring all groups together and we debrief on what makes communication effective. In the last part of the lesson we replay the game but this time talking is allowed.

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Making PE different from sport

Initially the boys said "Netball? Yuk!" but I have found that boys have liked the change. Everyone is involved. The netball rules are deliberately modified to divide Sport from PE. The problem with sport is that it is usually a game where the rules are known, a few are good at it (usually the same ones) and the rest stand around watching. I avoid dividing the class into two and having one half play the other. This also means they're not standing around being 'picked'. What is important for boys is that there is action straight away, less lining up, less sitting down, and the leader keeps it snappy. Using smaller groups means that more people are involved. It is a hard shift because PE has been seen as a practical skill-based subject.

At the beginning of the term we do a self assessment sheet. This has statements like "I don't call out when I want the ball", "I can't stand it when other players are not as good as me." The students rate themselves and after 10 weeks we redo the assessment and compare the scores focusing on what we have learned. The key ideas are simple: Listen to others, Accept other's skills, Rules are needed, Accept the consequences of the rules.

The key ideas are simple: Listen to others, Accept other's skills, Rules are needed, Accept the consequences of the rules

Without rules it's chaos

The unit on Fair Play is great. It works. We work specifically on why it's important to have rules. Here we use a combination of soccer and netball. Again there are teams of 6 or 8, usually randomly selected, or by birthdays or numbered off. In this game, if the ball is in the air it's netball, if it's on the ground then it's soccer. The only rule I give them is the boundary line where it is out. They play for five minutes. The boys are initially gentle but then start roughing each other up, there's a fair bit of push and shove. It's extremely frustrating for them. Without rules it's chaos.

In the debrief I ask them: What was good and what wasn't? What did you think of the game? What did you like and not like? Where have you been in a situation where you haven't had rules? What did you do? What would have helped you? How can you make this game better? This usually involves them setting some rules. Then we play the game for 5 more minutes or until the game gets heated again. The second debrief involves working out what the consequences should be if the rules are not followed. We keep playing and refining those rules.

The basic message is for them to work out why we need rules. The main reasons are to stop people getting hurt and to make it more fair. Boys get very big on fairness. They do get angry at times and I will tell them to go for a walk or use humour to defuse tension. I'm always telling them to get on with the game rather than complain. I also go in and talk to individuals: "Why don't you give him a hand? Make someone else look good."

So you get a lot of social needs met through inclusion, fun, and being heard. Does this reduce the amount of acting out?

Some boys still act out all the time. A lot depends on how the teacher handles it. The boys do have some power in that they have a say and get listened to. It's not traditional PE. The biggest challenge is shifting traditional methods of teaching PE, especially lining kids up. Sport is very linked to masculinity. Some boys are very sport-minded and they just want to go out there and 'kick butt'. I do get concerned about those boys who like games but who are always on the wrong end of hard contact. PE can promote getting on with one another and in taking different kinds of risks, like dance.

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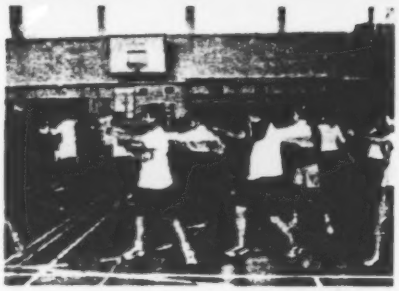
How do you get boys into dance?

At first boys' dance didn't work. We didn't have enough knowledge or technique and the boys hadn't been involved in a safe enough structure to take the risks involved. Boys' dance is now much better than it was. There's more use of props and groupwork. Safety is a big issue. We made it so that they didn't have to come up with something straight away. We developed a better atmosphere in the class, by being involved as the teacher and having rules that they couldn't put each other down. It's still not easy and we're conscious of not making students perform if they don't want to.



Creative dance is called Movement Studies and is part of PE. We've been doing it for five years but have introduced new dances this year. We give the boys lots of specific content and structure to make it safer: "This is what you do. This is when you do it." We do use different music for boys: it's more aggressive and they often fall over in the routines. They choose stuff like the theme music from Mission Impossible where there's a story or plot.

"Do we wear G strings?"

In Year 9 (Year 8, Australia) the first Unit is a Maori dance called Te Reo Kori. This year we're also doing Slap Dance and the African Fisherman Dance. In the second unit (four lessons) they have to create their own dance. We use professional instructors to teach basic Aerobics and Tae Bo movement. These are paid for out of their PE fee. Tae Bo is a combination of Tai Chi and Tae Kwon Do set to music (aerobics-style sweaty music of 138-146 beats per minute) using more martial type movements. The boys are not big on 'grapevines' or flowing hand movements. At the end of that they have to develop a 2-minute routine in groups of between 1 and 6. We help them with choreography and a few different moves. Each performance is videoed and they are assessed on timing and rhythm, interpretation, originality and groupwork. The aerobic routines were introduced 4 years ago and although we got comments like "Girls do this" and "Do we get to wear G strings?" the boys are enjoying it. It helped that the male PE teachers were doing the classes with them.

My advice is get involved, don't leave them alone, build on their strengths

In Year 12 (Year 11, Australia) the students create more complex dances routines and can choose to combine boys and girls performances. Again it is videoed and assessed on the same criteria. This year the major drama production, Judas Zoo, required 12 male dancers which was something new for this school. Heaps of boys wanted to be involved. Related factors were that the Black Grace dance company, a Maori dance group, visited the school a few times, the captain of the first XV and other peer leaders were involved and that we have innovative drama productions.

What have you learned?

I keep asking myself why are we teaching PE in this way? Are we making a difference to students in who they are, their identity, in whether they belong?3

We can still do the physical stuff but I've moved away from sport only. It does have a place but not in PE. I am changing my approach so that I am working with social needs beyond the physical. If students, especially boys, know they're safe then they'll get on better with each other and take more risks. I'm also more interested in my work. This is my first co-ed school and I was initially caught up in the "bloody boys" attitude. I had it wrong. Now, boys are exciting in PE but I don't leave them to sort things out among themselves. My advice is get involved, don't leave them alone, build on their strengths.

Pip Woodward is the Head Teacher for Outdoor Ed, Health, PE and Food Technology at Howick College, Auckland. She is involved in trialling and writing up units to support the new NZ curriculum: 'Health and Physical Education in the NZ Curriculum' (1999). Contact the Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand for copies.

Conference Report

Working with Boys Building Fine Men July 1-3 1999

Aboriginal Elder Bill Smith welcoming delegates

Participants came to Newcastle from every state and territory in Australia (and 21 from New Zealand) to hear teachers, police, Indigenous men, community workers, youth and health workers describe their efforts in turning boys into fine men. In his welcoming speech on behalf of the local indigenous people, Bill Smith noted that a better title would be "Working with Fine Boys, Building Fine Men". Trefor Lloyd from Working With Men in London and Freerk Ykema from the Netherlands described the work being carried out in their countries. Almost 400 attended the three days. Thirty two workshops were presented following the themes of: Mentoring Boys, Boys and Sports, Boys Performing, Boys and Learning, Programs for Indigenous Boys and Young Men, Boys' Coping Skills, Programs for Boys and Young Men and Boys in the Wild. In addition, a number of practical skills workshops were held as part of the Working With Boys and Young Men National Training Project.

An important part of the conference was the contribution from boys. Twenty young men from Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle provided dramatic input during the opening, in workshops and and over 50 participated in sessions where delegates were "trained" in running boys' groups.

Want to know more?...

A summary of the conference is being produced with speeches by keynote presenters, and workshop abstracts. An order form will be included with the next bulletin.

The comments on feedback sheets below give some idea of the variety and excitement of the event.

"The discussion about ADD, ADHD by a doctor in the workshop 'Boys Coping Skills' - It was refreshing to hear a doctor being honest about this issue and raising things that I'd long suspected." (Acting Assistant Principal, Central School)

"Networking with other participants. Sessions with practical components and handouts, to be able to take info away and consider/consolidate topics." (Teacher, State School)

"I enjoyed everything! Freerk was fantastic - so was Trefor. The highlight was the opening by the boys - also talking to them - what an insight." (Teacher, Catholic School)

"Homophobia - served to focus a number of thoughts I have had bouncing around for a while now. Managing boys behaviour workshops - good practical 'use tomorrow' type stuff."(Teacher, Secondary College)

"I have had a complete shift in my attitudes towards my boys. I will now stop considering them a problem, but rather as a young person with problems. This is going to be difficult to take back to school and influence colleagues but it has become very important to me now as a consequence of this conference. I have learnt to appreciate young men much more." (High School Teacher)

"Look at the integration of physical exercise with social and mental development across all year levels." (Teacher)

"We came a long way for this conference and it was a totally rewarding experience." (Teacher, NZ)

Trefor Lloyd addressing the conference

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The men and boys program

THE PROGRAM IS BASED IN THE **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Project was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The three programs which make up the Men and Boys Project are:

...men's & boys' well being has become a broad community concern

BOYSWORK - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education

Boys' behaviours and attitudes are increasingly being regarded as serious problems in our community. Boys low level of literacy and poor academic achievement are being raised alondside traditional concerns with aggression and risk taking. A key factor in all of these areas is boys' strongly held notion of how "to be a man". Boyswork refers to the newly developing ways of dealing with boys, individually and in groups, which recognises the importance of male identity. It includes skills and knowledge about boys and men.

THE FATHERCARE INITIATIVE - encouraging positive father involvement in communities

FatherCare promotes a positive social role for all adult males. Father Care recognises that a new style of fathering is needed, one based on the needs of children for mutually respectful relationships with men. This initiative stresses men's social role in the community (through volunteering for example) as well as in the family.

IMPROVING MEN'S HEALTH - research and teaching for better health

Includes the full spectrum of health from illness and disease to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Much of the research and health service delivery focussed on men has been based on a narrow disease model of health. This approach, as seen by men's poor health outcomes, is now judges to be inadequate. A more social model, incorporating men's identity, is being developed for a range of issues from prostate cancer and road traffic to depression and nutrition.

Seminars

Since its inception in January 1996, the Men & Boys Project has provided seminars for education, health, welfare and social service to professionals in all states of Australia. Parent meetings and demonstration sessions with boys have been held in remote rural as well as inner city locations.

Research

Research has been completed on men's health priorities, boy's needs, father's approaches to teaching driving, and men's behaviours in pharmacies. Action Research into the schools approaches of engaging boys in learning, and to teaching fathering issues is underway.

Publications

A range of publications on boys' education, fathering and men's health have been produced and are widely used in human services.

The project is managed by Richard Fletcher.

For further information please contact: The Men and Boys Program
Ph: 02 49 21 8739 Fax: 02 49 218686 Email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au

Boys in Schools - Resources for Teachers
Order Form

Invoices can not be sent for less than $100.00.
Make cheques payable to: Men & Boys Program
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The University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308

Title	Pub. No	Price	Qty	Total
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (4 issues)	970	$35.00		
Being a Man Photopak	979	$125.00		
Boys in Schools	961	$24.95		
Getting Dads Involved in Schools	978	$14.50		
Improving Boys' Education (a manual for schools)	973	$40.00		
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The University of Newcastle

The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN [illegible] Initiatives Addressing [illegible]

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BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN

Vol 2 No 4 December 1999

ABOUT THE BULLETIN

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Editorial

This issue focuses on physical and social involvement. We bring you a number of articles about initiatives that engage boys either physically or through making decisions about their school. At Alinjarra (WA) Ian Robbins describes how the Oral Language priority laid the foundations for more direct work with targeted boys – a once a week lunchtime challenge that is designed to build skills in cooperation, social awareness and self management. At Wickham (WA), Suzanne Temple and Graham Barnes used games to work on the social development of boys in a mining town culture that emphasised aggression and macho behaviour.

The games themselves are the tools through which Graham gets boys to understand that they can have more fun and get treated better by each other instead of trying to show who's boss. Essentially the games are used to redefine what it means to be powerful and show how we can all win. This method was developed by Wilson McCaskill of The Game Factory. His approach to working with behaviour brings out the attitudes and feelings that lie behind the way students relate to each other. His interventions in the frustration, over-competitiveness and blaming that occurs when things don't go well for students are described in 'Teaching By Stealth'.

Boys being productively involved in school life and upholding positive values in the playground sound too good to be true. Part of the picture at Hurstville South Public School (NSW) is the real work taken on by the Student Council and in their Peer Support system. Ann McIntyre outlines some of the factors that help build a culture where it's normal for boys to be involved and where the older ones take care of the younger ones.

We also bring you excerpts of the keynote speech by Freerk Ykema at this year's 'Working With Boys, Building Fine Men' Conference. His 'Self Defence For Boys' program translates the physical exercises of Karate & Tai Chi into training in communication skills and social development. The ability to profoundly influence boys' lives through their engagement in discussion linked to simple exercises made a strong impression on the men and women who attended.

The last story relates to the use of mentors to engage students who are going nowhere in Year 10. Neil Worsley sets out what happened in an innovative project between staff from Westpac Bank and students from Cleveland St High School (NSW). Both parties benefited from the experience.

We also present two reviews of resources. Students at Weeroona College Bendigo (Vic) give their opinions on "Is it Worth It? Fathers and Sons talk about Violence", an anti-violence video that also uses clips from the movie 'Once Were Warriors'. The second resource is the Reach Out! Website designed to help young people get through tough times. What do we do about boys' depression if they don't seek help. If boys don't go to counsellors but do spend time on computers, this website could assist.

This edition of the Bulletin brings us to the end of the second year of publication. We think the materials are getting stronger and more thoughtful. We'd value your ideas and opinions on topics and stories you'd like to see published. Thanks for your support.

Rollo Browne & Richard Fletcher

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The cover photo shows boys 'playing' at cooperation in Wickham

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Guidelines for Contributors

The BOYS IN SCHOOLS BULLETIN is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content is meant to motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- *Say a bit about your school - What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?*
- *What happened?*
- *What lessons did you learn?*
- *What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?*

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at a previous issue of the Bulletin. Or contact us and talk about it.

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Making Links: An Alinjarra Challenge

Ian Robbins describes his school's approach to tackling the boys culture in classroom and playground and building positive links between boys and men in Alinjarra, Western Australia.

Situated in a young suburb 14 kilometres north of Perth, Alinjarra Primary draws its 620 children from a varied population with a cross section of cultural backgrounds. General conduct in the school has been managed through a carefully developed Behaviour Management Plan with community support throughout the life of the school. However, sufficient disquiet about playground behaviours three years ago has led to an engagement with social skills and ultimately to a set of strategies directed at boys.

Establishing A Need

Useful data about Year 6 children's perceptions of the playground interactions and classroom disruptive behaviour was prepared by teacher Mike Atkinson. He asked them what it was about classroom behaviour they didn't like, what kinds of things became problems, and what bothered them about what happened in the playground? The responses included: other boys lying once they'd caused trouble, not taking their share of the blame, lots of niggling and name-calling.

Teachers on duty were noticing boys interfering in others' games for the sake of it, teasing of loners, boys running in groups not able to find something positive to do. This was a new element in the school culture. Parents shocked by swearing in the playground and brought it to the school's attention.

In 1996 there was a feeling among staff that it was time to intervene and a committee was formed. The "whole school" outlook of two specialist teachers on the committee, Val Brooks and Chris Begovich, provided valuable overview of year group behaviours. The preparedness of staff to volunteer at the outset for this work has been significant in making a difference.

Since that initial identification we have developed a mainly preventative stance. In response to observations, a check of duty file entries was made and a checklist of inappropriate behaviours in both classroom and playground used to provide a baseline from which to work.

Making A Start

During 1997 and 1998 we placed emphasis on sets of courtesies ranging from simple greetings, interruption and queuing etiquette to the interactions involved in successfully dealing with teasing and bullying. "Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms" by McGrath & Francey was used as a basis. The essential elements of each courtesy, the oral language involved, were communicated via assemblies, newsletter, small charts and activity packs for classroom teachers. Improvement in the oral language of interpersonal skills was given impetus via the Oral Language Priority strategies. (Our school, like most in WA, identifies 1 or 2 priorities each year, for example, we focused on a Thinking Skills Priority between 1995 and 1997. This year oral language is regarded as being sufficiently integrated by teachers to be part of mainstream practice and we have added the Social Skills Priority.)

Putting Things Together

Language Of Social Interaction

Children were being taught the positive language necessary to encourage others, request entry to games, take an assertive stance, request assistance and put a sequenced case in an argument. In early 1997 a series of notes and activities from a local Speech Pathologist, was trialled in a Year 4 classroom and when coupled with "Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms" formed the basis of a schoolwide resource to develop a fortnightly focus on the language of social interaction.

Thinking Skills

In the same year this was linked with the Thinking Skills Priority to bring DeBono's 'Six Thinking Hats'; 'Stop, Think, Do' and 'Thinking Actively in a Social Context' (T.A.S.C.) to bear upon the resolution processes in playground incidents. Six Hats is still regularly used by the deputies to good effect with children around playground incidents.

The need for specific strategies for boys

By the end of term 3 1998 there was evidence to indicate that the combination of measures was making a general difference. There were less duty file entries for children in general, and boys in particular. There were some significant individual improvements in the baseline behaviours checklist in teachers' records. This evidence led to a decision to continue the general strategies in place, but also to focus on some specific ones for boys.

The checklist had started in 1996, and included such behaviours as swears frequently, disrupts class, makes gender references, for example 'poofter'. By using the original data as a baseline, we tracked the level of the identified behaviours. The data showed that boys were responsible for 91% of the inappropriate behaviours identified. One possible direction was indicated by our work with learning styles and observation of boys interests. Efforts needed to be made to provide more active opportunities for co-operation, mutual trust and learning of socially appropriate ways of reacting to competition, success, frustration or disappointment.

Peer Mediation

A Peer Mediation Program was introduced as an additional strategy in 1998. With a particularly capable and co-operative Student Council (7 girls & 5 boys) trained as mediators, we felt that such a program could provide children in the playground with an extra and, perhaps, less daunting source of help with minor disagreements. The boys did it well. They brought problems to deputies and class teachers, were approached as often as girls but at the end of the year they commented they hadn't enjoyed it as they missed out on active playtime. The program has continued in 1999.

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Parents too

With pressure evident in the society about male roles and behaviours, especially during the parenting years, some strategies to develop awareness of parents to the way boys are managing the elements of social and academic schooling, seemed imperative.

A Parent Forum conducted in June 1998 to share perceptions and concerns about social skills resulted in some improved communication with parents about the Oral Language Priority, the Managing School Behaviour Policy and behavioural feedback documents. We subsequently changed the 'yellow slip' sent home to Parents to let us know what they felt about the identified problem, what they were doing about it and left space for them to provide other relevant information.

Refining Our Approach

The combined effort of initiatives like Peer Mediation and improved parent contacts in addition to the social skills strategy delivery resulted in fewer interventions (contacts with peer mediators, the teacher on duty, or the deputy). The exception was at Year 4 level where there was a larger group of boys with 'at risk' behaviours. Overall the number of students involved in incidents had dropped from about 15% to approximately 10%. The incidents were less serious. There was much less overt violence like punching. It seemed that the children knew what to do before it got to that level. It became OK to tell at a certain point. Dobbing had become redefined so that, "It's OK to tell if you've already told the person you don't want them to do it."

From the general social skills strategies linked to Thinking Skills and Oral Language of the previous two years, we decided last October that the Social Skills Priority needed to continue in 1999 with the following emphases:

- Continuation of the activities associated with the "Courtesies of the Fortnight".
- Comprehensive reward system for appropriately behaved children.
- Boys in Education
  - Raise awareness of needs.
  - Initiate professional development of staff in the Boys in Education issue.
  - Arrange specific activities for 'at risk' boys - the "Alinjarra Challenge" (see below)
  - Organise men and boys events (see below).
- Provide small group intervention for 'at risk' children.
- Continuation of the use of Peer Mediators.
- Continue utilising 'Bill Rogers' behavioural management strategies, particularly "Repair and Rebuild", as well as elements of "Managing Challenging Children" by Gordon.

Two concepts from Gerry Gordon's work have been particularly useful. One of these is the 'emotional garden' of children that are 'at risk' and the importance of teachers 'tending the garden'. Building relationships of care, interest and trust are seen as starting points. The other is the notion of 'bush tracks' of behaviour that will widen if we continue to tread them. Recognising a track of behaviour not wanted, is essential.

The Alinjarra Challenge

A small fraction of the staffing F.T.E. was allocated to two volunteering male staff, Paul Andrijich and Chris Clayton, to cater for an 'Alinjarra Challenge' group of 35 boys from Year 4 to 6 who would benefit from regular lunchtime co-operative games and activities. The session activity usually lasted about 30 minutes. Lunchtime is only normally 40 min long. The Challenge only ran once a week but the day varied because it depended to some extent on the weather. The program involved a lot of games. We wanted to focus especially on how to deal with being knocked down, and how to include boys who couldn't participate easily. Selections were done from the checklists. These were boys who weren't able to play a game without hassle and included a few provocative victims. They were often the ones keenest to see the Challenge happen, even on bad weather days.

An initial meeting with the identified boys was addressed by the Principal and the volunteering male staff members to outline the key objectives for the boys.

These were;

- Enjoyment of games and activities designed to build their skills.
- Sharing new challenges to play and participate in different activities in various forms using each other's strengths and their teacher's guidance.
- Learning to trust and value each other and their volunteering teachers.

It was made clear that the once a week lunchtime activity would be voluntary, but we would like them to take the opportunity being offered.

An incentive [illegible]be involved was an arrangement for the first activity, an hour of co-operation games with Wilson McCaskill, to be held during normal morning in-class time. During those sessions taken with half the group at a time, both staff members were able to assess the interactive, attitudinal, co-ordination level and self-esteem status of each boy as Wilson demonstrated the games.

Recalling those sessions Paul says "They were a good active starting point giving the boys a sense that what we had planned for them was worth looking forward to and suited their energy. Some boys chose to ignore the first one or two organised activities at lunchtime but the invitation remained in place and allowed for some comings and goings. On this basis the decision to participate is firmly the boy's. However, the virtues and benefits of the program were explained to them in detail before leaving the decision to them. Activities all featured a common goal that can only be achieved by positive, encouraging, co-operative effort by pairs, groups or the whole cohort."

Some of the children's comments about the program include:

Anthony

"I think the Alinjarra Challenge is cool because we get to do all different sports like basketball and orienteering. We also get to play handball. I think Mr. Andrijich should make it go longer. I hope I will be in it next year and I will never quit because the Alinjarra Challenge is just so cool to me." (Year 4)

Nathan

"I really like the Alinjarra Challenge because: i) You meet more children and make more friends in your age group. ii) You learn more fun games as well as knowing the rules and the umpiring of the game." (Year 6)

Jarrod

"I think the Alinjarra Challenge is wicked but I reckon it should go on for the whole lunch. It is good for Year 1 to Year 6. I hope I am in it next year. It is good for me because I can teach my brother and my small friends. The real reason is it is a fun type of sport." (Year 4)

Mat

"I like the Alinjarra Challenge because it is fun and you get to play fun sports but not only sports, we do orienteering also. The Alinjarra Challenge is for boys who like playing sport and running around. The only thing I don't like is some of the other children's attitudes but other than that the Alinjarra Challenge is very good." (Year 4)

The program has a few weeks to run and evaluation of the effect on individual and group behaviour is not yet complete. A link between the involvement in the Challenge group and improvements against the baseline checklist will be examined across Years 4-6.

Paul's Reflections on the Alinjarra Challenge

"From a co-ordinators point of view there were a few obstacles to overcome in the initial planning. Both Chris and myself, whilst enthusiastic, did not have that 'crutch' of being able to look at 'best practice' type programs that were in existence, and modify it to suite our children's needs. The program was basically created from scratch and included elements that we both thought were important or required. Trying to get those children who would most benefit from the program to stay involved also presented us with a hurdle.

While we were as encouraging as we could be and offered fun and purposeful activities, we could not and would not drag the children into the program against their will. We both feel the program is of benefit to the children and would like to remain a part of it, if it continues next year. The boys who have been a part of the program since the beginning are genuinely enthusiastic, and many want to continue next year.

Other ideas

There may be some argument for inviting children into the program who display the right sort of qualities, to rub shoulders with those children at risk, perhaps a one to two mix. Concurrent co-ordinator time would also be of benefit so we could sit down and discuss directions for the program. This would enable a more thorough and detailed program to be delivered to the children.

Perhaps having a 'main event' each term would also be a further carrot to dangle in front of the boys, like an incursion/ excursion. Maybe the inclusion of 'buzz' words would also be of benefit. If the 'buzz' word for the week was 'trust', the activities conducted with the children would reflect this notion. Follow up activities or discussion would enable the link to be made from the games into some sort of real life context. That is one area I feel was not completed satisfactorily, mainly due to time constraints and would need to be improved upon next year."

Men And Boys Event

P & C support emanated from a mother of two boys who offered logistic support for a suggested men and boys event to create a sense of male community. She helped organise the evening with The Games Factory. Wilson had been involved in professional development to staff when the school had embarked on the social skills. So we knew about the use of dynamic co-operation and trust games with year groups to show both the typical behaviours of children and the activities that can be used to build co-operative, valuing and trusting behaviour, improving participation and positive attitudes to each other.

The evening was organised to introduce significant male carers to the basic elements of the support adult males can offer boys. It was an open invitation to families of boys in Years 4 - 6. Approximately 60% of the invited boys attended - some 100 men and boys. Women did handle the catering but the female staff stayed away so as not to interfere. Male staff were visible supports, acting for boys without guests. The evening was a frenetic, enjoyable learning experience of co-operative games with a valuable commentary from the leader, Wilson.

A father of one of the boys wrote to say: "I found the evening very enlightening and personally enjoyable. Andrew also advises me that he had lots of fun and enjoyed playing the games. I am certain most of the other people in attendance also derived enjoyment that evening. Wilson was able to share many learnings and much wisdom with the group and was able to provide us all with some lessons in behaviour and attitudes towards each other."

One father asked for an outline of what we can teach boys through games. All fathers received this summary.

- We need to participate. We need to be part of the game. Feeling part of the game is important for all of us.
- Those who play the games well have to involve the others to enable the game to be played. We have to adjust our play to involve others, to improve the game. (Ball passing games). Life works like that, school works like that.
- To be able to enjoy the game you need to participate. Having someone else to help you participate makes it easier. Always look for help to participate.
- When we are faced with something new or something we find hard to do we may make mistakes. Mistakes help teach us how to do things better. We must help each other try. The most important bit is to try, and try some more. Trying with someone else makes trying easier. Help each other try. (Shoulder, elbow, wrist game).
- If we are having problems with something we need to talk. Talking helps. Showing or telling helps. To solve problems we often need to talk togethers. (Letter shapes game and carpet square games).

- In games it is often necessary to have winners and losers. Learn to enjoy the game. Playing - being part of the team - is more important than the result of the game. Being upset about losing will lessen your chances of winning next time. Enjoy playing and leave each game happy to have played. (Ball passing game).
- Our greatest need is to be included. To be included we need to try. To try we need encouragement and help from others.

For men the main message was:

- Look to include your boys.
- Adjust your expectations to involve the boys at a level where they can participate.
- Adjust your play to enable the boys to succeed, involve others and improve the game (more fun)
- Encourage and support "trying".
- Talk and show whenever possible when boys face new situations.
- Let boys see you try, make mistakes, solve new challenges and come through smiling.

Pre-Primary teachers also collaboratively organised an early evening opening for fathers to bring their children along to share the learning environment. While attendance was not high, the attending men were very appreciative of the opportunity.

After the Men & Boys Event, it was noticeable in the playground that the boys were pleased to be involved with the dads. Interestingly, relationships between male staff and boys without a male carer have flowed on from that night and been maintained. One such boy (Year 6) regularly initiates conversation and shows his work to one of the male staff.

And How Are We Going?

An action research project, conducted as part of University studies by ex-Alinjarra teacher Sue Winzer, on a Year 5 class of boys and girls has been useful. In September 1999 children's perceptions of variables relating to the whole school's Social Skills Priority were tested. The measured variables were personal courtesy, classroom courtesy, awards, attitudes of teachers, courtesy in the playground, the Challenge Group, and Peer Mediators.

As this Year 5 was identified as the most challenging cohort of boys, the 84% positive response to all seven variables was good news. Of particular interest was the perception of children about the attitude of staff to the Social Skills. This was the highest rating variable indicating that children could see focus, emphasis and expectation. Whilst not as highly rated, the Challenge Group was positively viewed both by children not included in the group and those who were. Paul and Chris are enthusiastic about the worth of providing the Challenge Group and already considering the ways to deliver the mix of activities to appeal to all the invited boys next year. A recent Challenge Group gathering was shadowed by a group of girls wishing to take part.

When given an opportunity to state one positive aspect of the school in a recent survey, 66% of parents nominated 'A Caring Ethos' or 'Approach to Behaviour'.

Our worst years were 1994 & 1995. There were only 3 suspensions, but it was hard work. There were numbers of children whose play time and playing areas were regularly restricted. Now there have been no suspensions for nearly 3 years, and restricted play is very infrequent.

What About Next Year?

When asked about the Challenge Josh said, "I think the Alinjarra Challenge is great because the sports we do are fun and also you get to make more friends than you already have (which I surely need) but next year I think there should be an Alinjarra Challenge for girls too, because not only boys know sports but girls do too. They also should have male teachers because men are better at sports than women (no offence to all those female teachers that have always wanted to do this type of sport but it's true) but getting back to the point I think it's awesome." (Year 5)

While we have made an impact on behaviour we still face entrenched attitudes. Perhaps this will be the next stage. Back from separation to inclusion through success.

Our likely direction in 2000 is to maintain our Thinking Skills, Oral Language and Social Skills linked together as continued good practice. It is the combination of the three linked priorities and the focussed strategies that have equipped a major proportion of children to handle their social interactions better.

The positive reaction from the men & boys event has encouraged us to plan for other similar events and to extend to younger year groups.

We now believe that the best approach involves a focussed effort with targeted groups of boys, mainly at either end of the school will build on this year's gains.. Preschool and Year 1 play quite violently, action man games, scratching, using sticks and throwing things. They are not used to having their play controlled. At the other end of the school, Years 5 & 6 need more work on building tolerance and inclusive group dynamics. They are the school leaders and it is a time when there are strong peer group pressures

Looking back, what has made the most difference?

Definitely teaching the language of social interaction and the melding of thinking skills onto it. The Challenge is great but this is the core of it.

Ian Robbins has been Deputy of Alinjarra Primary School, Perth WA since the school was founded in 1988. He is currently acting principal. He and other teachers mentioned can be contacted on (08) 9342 3388.

Self Defence For Boys

This is an edited version of the keynote address by Freerk Ykeema to the 'Working With Boys Building Fine Men Conference' in Newcastle July 1999.

This will make them stand more firm in a confrontation with others and they will have better self control

It's a great honour for me to be here in Australia presenting the course Self Defence for Boys: Learning How To Deal With Violence and How to Prevent Violence. I'm a teacher at a large secondary school in the north of Holland (where among other tasks) I deliver the courses 'Self Defence for Girls' and 'Self Defence for Boys' during the PE lessons.

What's also relevant is that I've been practicing Tai Chi during the last fifteen years which has taught me a lot about the movement and focus of self defence and about the mental, social and spiritual effect of practicing Tai Chi. This has been of great importance when we were developing the course. I myself have experienced the impact of specific physical training on personal development. A major part of the course Self Defence for Boys was based on this conviction.

Connecting physical abilities with mental and social development

I can give you a simple example. When someone learns to stand strong in a physical way, with his feet grounded, rooted and their breath centered below in the belly, it will enlarge their self confidence. This will make them stand more firm in a confrontation with others and they will have better self control. In addition, the ability to stand strong and relaxed opens the door for better observation and listening to someone else. So here you have the integration of the social part of the story. What started as standing strong develops into being confident and calm. There are more possibilities of communicating in a proper way. Well at least these possibilities appear, and with the guidance of the teacher with good educational qualities they can become reality.

Now we have to go back in time for a better understanding of the roots of our course.

Two different demands

In Holland in 1986 a program was developed for girls of 15 years and over. It was embedded in the school curriculum of physical education as a reaction to the widespread sexual intimidation and sexual violence in the Netherlands. So far the girls course has proved to be quite successful and at this moment 1500 teachers are qualified to teach this course. As the program gradually became effective in many schools, boys saw girls getting stronger and began to react with their own demands for courses in self defence. These requests were initially turned down in order not to interfere with the needs of the girls. The thinking was, "Does it make sense to teach the girls to defend themselves against boys if the boys learn the same tricks?" However these demands became stronger and it was recognised that compared to girls, boys in general are more often victims of physical violence. Although they are probably not harmed by sexual violence in the same proportion as the girls.

There was also and still is a demand from society that we should teach our boys something about communication with girls. A lot of problems are caused by boys who intimidate and trouble girls by their rude behaviour. This often leads to sexual harassment and worse. Secondly there is a growing unrest in Holland about the rising number of violence criminal offences, mostly involving boys and men. Thirdly there has been public debate about changing values and standards and loss of them. Our society has grown enormously. We are living together with almost fifteen million people in a very, very small country. In the last twenty years our country has become a multi racial society. And though we are said to be a tolerant

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It is a psycho-physical course in which we constantly link physical exercises with mental and social abilities

community there have been a lot of problems arising lately. They mostly deal about how do we have to communicate with each other, which values should have in common and which standards should be respected by everyone.

So, we wanted to make our boys stronger by teaching them self defence. We also wanted to teach them some basic communication abilities. We want to talk to them about things as bullying, group pressure, boundaries, body language, mental power, intuition, sexuality and forms of sexual violence. In other words we had to create an educational program centered around self defence.

A Positive Vision

It was very clear to us that we shouldn't create a course in which boys had to learn a lot of rules to obey to in everyday life. This wouldn't work and more importantly it would reflect a negative vision about boys. We felt more sympathy with the idea that boys must be seen as youngsters who try to succeed in getting grown up; who experiment with different attitudes; who copy the behaviour of elder boys or grownups; who have problems in dealing with group pressure; who are uncertain about how to make contact with girls and so on. In this way the boys' course obtained it's own identity. Not just a course to protect the girls. But a course that tries to understand the boys' problems, their gender specific needs and the lack of important abilities to deal with conflicts, both within themselves and with others. We tried to see the very dynamic force inside them to realise their potential as a human being.

Three Basics For Physical Communication

We saw a very important similarity between self-defence and communication abilities. Self-defence, itself can be seen as a form of communication: physical communication. For this kind of communication you need three basics: self control, self reflection and self confidence.

- You need self control to avoid acting on impulse.
- You need self reflection in order to ask yourself what's happening? What would be the best attitude to deal with this situation? And afterwards, did I react right or wrong? What could have been better?
- You need self confidence to trust on your own body, its reflexes and power.

But these three basics are also needed in every other form of communication. Whether you have a discussion, a disagreement, whether you are dating your girlfriend or if you have a problem with your friends. In a discussion you need self control in order to listen well to another. You need self reflection to check your own point of view and compare this with others'. And you need self confidence to defend your point of view and to follow your own ideas and feelings. So we created the course around these three basics.

It is a psycho-physical course in which we constantly link physical exercises with mental and social abilities. It is an attractive course with a very strong structure. Once you know and experience the 'diamond' inside each lesson you can go on by yourself. I already gave you an example of learning to stand strong.

Rock and Water

An important example of our approach is the rock and water attitudes. In self defence there are a lot of different martial arts which can be used. We choose two completely different styles, Karate and Tai Chi, rock and water. These two different styles are connected with two different attitudes to communication. Rock communication and water communication. So, hard karate rock and flexible tai chi water. Both styles and both attitudes are respected ones.

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We start to teach our boys to ward off - when attacked, with Karate but also with Tai Chi, the water option. They learn both attitudes because the situation decides which attitude would be the best. After the physical exercise we make the transfer to everyday life. "Is it possible to use the rock and water attitudes when you have a discussion with someone? What does being rock sound like in a conversation? Of being water?" Then we practice such a conversation. The same questions you may ask about dating. "How is it to date someone when you are like a rock? And how is it to date someone when you are more like water?" In addition a few video scenes accompany these questions and exercises.

Freerk requests a volunteer from the audience to demonstrate 'rock and water' The volunteer is asked to take a very strong position as a rock. Freerk makes sudden karate moves to test his rock firmness and then explains:

A rock stands rather firm but a rock has also something to do with communication. We teach our boys that rock is something which is very narrow minded, doesn't react to anything. A rock has a very strong will of its own. It's very important for a boy that he can be like a rock. So a rock is firm, he has his own will but a rock has also his weak side.

Freerk demonstrates the strength of the rock by pushing from the front. The rock is solid. But the weak side is demonstrated by pushing from the side. It is easy to unbalance the rock.

I hardly have to do anything (to unbalance the rock). So that's what we have to keep in mind a rock can be very strong but in his strength he can also be very weak. Okay, now the other attitude.

Freerk takes up the water attitude. He asks volunteer to push him on one shoulder and then to push him harder. He yields in a twisting motion, without moving his feet, and the force of the push slides off him.

This was a bit like water. When you are like water you are communicating with the body of your partner. His force, your yielding and you keep in contact with him. So I keep my own base, my breath is low, I anticipate, I look what he is doing and while anticipating I think 'I am going with him'. When you are like water you keep listening and you keep reflecting to yourself 'What is he saying?' You're trying to make a communication. When you are like rock you don't even listen. You just go your own way. So we ask the boys, "Can you imagine being a rock in conversation? And can you imagine being water in a communication?"

After having experienced and practiced a water and a rock options in a physical way you have a group discussion intending to make it transfer to everyday life. I'll ask, "Have you ever seen a fight where rock and water options were used?" They probably have. "Have you ever seen or heard a discussion in which one of the participants was a rock and the other one water? What's that like? Tell us". Then the boys form pairs and have a conversation in which one is rock and the other one is water. After this they change attitudes and they both have to be water and after that they both have to be rock. These exercises are supported by some physical exercises which are also focused on the rock and water attitude. So they experience the attitudes by themselves in several ways.

Boys don't need a policeman

What kind of a teacher is needed to work with boys and teach them the course? In Holland it is the PE teacher. I've been thinking a lot about this question because it's a crucial one. The course isn't simple to teach, that's true. But what's needed is very simple. It is involvement and a genuine desire to understand boys behaviour and to help them in many ways. Boys don't need a policeman in front of the class. They need a teacher who can correct boys if necessary, but also a teacher who sees the good sides of the boy even when he's behaving badly. This doesn't mean a soft approach but an honest and a clear one. Boys have to know and feel those two sides in that teacher. So appreciate them and correct them. Let them feel you know them and respect them in their attempts to become a man. When someone is really involved it's easier to have a real talk and exchange with the boys. You can't pretend this. Genuine involvement forms the basis of successful teaching.

Deaf to Theory

The physical oriented setting of the course is extremely important. Boys seem to be deaf to information which is given in a theoretical way. They forget it or they can't make it transfer to their everyday life. This means there's no real connection between the theory and the feelings, emotions and behaviour, which is essentially the goal of the teacher. What makes the boys course special is the constant connection of physical, mental and social aspects of many skills, a connection that can be transferred into their everyday life. The transfer is reinforced because after each lesson the boys have to answer questions for the next lesson. For example: Mention different forms of violence. Which forms of violence have you experienced in your life? Describe a situation of violence in which you were a victim and a situation in which you were a perpetrator. Tell why you reacted the way you did. Was it an appropriate reaction? Would you act the same again next time or not?

At the end of the course they write down what they have learned. Which skills affected them most. In which way they may have changed and what they possibly have missed. At first, without these reinforcing questions, we found that the impact of the course was too small. Since including these questions the impact of the course increased a lot. We teachers got a lot of very important feedback in this way from the boys. Their answers focused us on the real important points of the course and gave us feedback on our teaching. And it confronted us over and over again with the importance of the course and the need of continuing the process of developing it.

In each lesson self control, self reflection and self confidence are mentioned and trained in three ways

Self Reflection

A process of learning is impossible without moments of feedback. Actually learning implies feedback. So self reflection is another important element in a course. Working with boys and building fine men implies that you have to confront boys with their behaviour. They have to see and realise what they are doing and the results of it. They have to learn and wonder why they are doing what they are doing. They should learn to see which abilities they miss when they are confronted with violence with communicational problems or relational problems. One needs self reflection to become aware of himself and self reflection is strongly aligned with self control. Without self control, self reflection is impossible.

In each lesson self control, self reflection and self confidence are mentioned and trained in three ways. Firstly they're in a lesson that is a direct reflection of physical action and social skill and if possible a transfer to their everyday life. Secondly there is a reflection during group discussion. Boys give their opinion, they listen to each other, they think things over, they argue, they reflect. Thirdly everything is reinforced by answering the questions they receive after each lesson. Writing down their answers and experiences after having thought about it at home on their own.

Self confidence

In physical exercises, if you push them a bit, they will lose their balance at once. Well, how does this affect their self confidence and their calmness when confronted with a conflict situation? How difficult will it be to keep self control if you can't stand solid when you are confronted with violence? And how difficult is it to look into someone's eyes when your body position can't be anchored? In a few exercises we teach them to stand stronger and calmer and in each lesson this is an important point of attention.

I will show you a few exercises because I think performance explains more than a lot of words.

Volunteers from the audience run through an exercise on boundaries.

Boundaries

In teaching about boundaries I first chat with the boys and tell them something about rules. That there are very strict in traffic, there are fairly strict rules for example when they play football or soccer. But there are also fairly strict rules in the way you associate with other people. Most of those rules are unwritten. There is one central rule concerning a person's private territory. Everyone has a private territory and once someone else crosses the boundary of it, it's unpleasant. Boys have to know that others don't like it. Of course they have some idea but they have to see it, they have to feel it and you have to exercise it. When we cross the boundary we ask the boys what do you feel? You have to confront them with the feeling of crossing a boundary.

A number of video clips are screened. Freerk draws out teaching points from the dramatised scenes, for example ...

Tunnel & Beach Attitudes

After each video we have a short discussion with the boys. For example, following the video clip about body language we present two main attitudes. One is called the tunnel attitude and the other one, the opposite of the tunnel is the beach attitude. Tunnel is this shoulders down, head down, shut off from the world feeling powerless, feeling down. Such an attitude is not the best to prevent nasty remarks or violence against you. The other one the beach attitude is feeling strong, self assured, breast up, making large steps without over acting. It isn't macho but it's self confident power without a hostile radiation. Such an attitude will protect you most of the time from nasty remarks and things like bullying. We have several significant exercises to train these attitudes and to confront the boys with the different dynamics of them.

In conclusion ...

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What is a real man?

Perhaps the most important question in this conference on building fine men, is, "What is a real man?" I think it's very important that a teacher shows his owns principles and his own mental power in practicing his principles in everyday life. He must show his self confidence in a way he deals with problems. He may also show his doubts and struggles and feelings when he is confronted with difficulties. Boys have to realise that boyhood and manhood aren't separated by a major gap. When they realise that, it may give them a bit of rest. Then they don't have to exert themselves that much to copy unreal media images of man.

You know of course the image of that He-man. Strong, emotions controlled, not using too many words especially not about feelings, no doubts and so on. A boy who tries to copy this and who isn't taught to develop self confidence in discovering his own individual qualities will never become a man. He will always have to pretend he is one. So when you are working with boys and try to build fine men we need to know what a real man is like... What's real doesn't need a mask. There's an inner aspect that can't be taught to the boys and you can't teach it to the teachers but it starts in self control, self reflection and most important of all self confidence. You can develop this in many ways but in our boy's course we made a connection with self defence because that's the way our boys like it most.

I came to talk here because I was convinced of the fact that I was going to meet a lot of colleagues with the best qualities to work with boys. This conviction gave me a lot of self confidence and in this way there is a large similarity between myself, my own development and the course. Apart from all the beautiful and important things we want to teach the boys there is only one thing, the most important of all. Our support in developing their self confidence because that is the only way to become a real fine man. Thank you.

Freerk Ykema is a PE teacher at the Openbare 'Community of Schools' in Schagen in the north of Holland where he trialled the Self Defence and the Prevention of Violence for Boys Course in 1995. Following the Newcastle conference, he ran a training program for teachers interested in these methods. He will be returning to Australia in August 2000 to offer seminars and Train-the Trainer courses. If you're interested, you can contact the Men & Boys Program on 02 4921 8739. A previous article appeared in this Bulletin, Vol 1 No 2 (1998).

There's an inner aspect that can't be taught to the boys and you can't teach it to the teachers but it starts in self control, self reflection and most important of all self confidence

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Cutting Through Aimlessness

The Cleveland Street High School - Westpac Mentor Program

Neil Worsley describes an innovative work - school mentoring program between Year 10 & 11 students and staff from Financial Markets section at Westpac.

Westpac mentor and Cleveland St High School Mentee at the presentation dinner

Cleveland Street High School is a small, inner city, co-educational high school in Sydney. Approximately 55% of the students are of Aboriginal background, and 30% of non-English speaking background. The students mostly come from the surrounding suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo, which are dominated by public housing estates. Many of students at the school are on specialised programs to assist overcome socio-economic disadvantage, or with specific literacy needs and other learning difficulties. For a variety of reasons, many students also exhibit signs of low self-esteem and aspirations and often have seemingly inappropriate life goals. For many, the road ahead seems to be leading to the same oppressive life difficulties that the adults around them face.

Providing an Interested Adult

Many students drift aimlessly through their schooling, before reaching the exit point without much direction. This program was seen as a way of redressing this situation, by providing an 'interested adult' for each student over the later part of his or her schooling. The program was seen as most suitable for students who did not have major behaviour problems in school, who were academically capable, but not necessarily outstanding. It was not meant to be a specific career based program but targeting student welfare needs. It was developed to be appropriate for year 10 and 11 students without specific behaviour or learning difficulties; those who need some direction and assistance with life goals and who may also have related low self-esteem and/or attendance issues.

The idea of the program was based on a similar program run in the UK by Swiss Bank, which included a range of mentor initiatives. Our mentor program in summary was to train 20 volunteer mentors from Westpac Banking's Financial Markets to become mentors for 14 selected students, (11 of which were boys), at Cleveland Street High School in inner city Sydney.

After an initial matching process, a program of structured meetings was used to encourage a mentor relationship between the mentors and the students. Later, the students and mentors would work on a project together, which allowed the individual relationships to develop more deeply and with less structure. A final presentation evening and dinner provided an end-point for the relationships, (if this was necessary for the pair).

For Cleveland Street High School, a student mentor scheme was seen as a way of encouraging students in their schooling and broadening their life experiences and self-esteem. For the Westpac Banking Group the mentor program was part of the bank's 'Community 2000' activities and was designed to increase the banker's awareness and interest in the broader community. However we had an idea that working with these young people would do more than just that!

What we hoped to achieve

For students: Display improved self-motivation; have tolerance for others; have responsibility for their own actions; have self respect; improve student attendance patterns and reverse student and community expectations about education and life options.

For mentors: Increased awareness and interest in the broader community, improvements in the level of skill or career satisfaction, improvement in publicity and pride for Westpac.

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Stretch goal: Student and mentor form an on-going, meaningful relationship on their own initiative.

There are 3 major components to the program:

1. Training and matching of participants

After mentor volunteers from the bank were received, a short questionnaire and personal knowledge of the students and mentors were used to pair the nominated students. To have similar interests was not the priority for selection, it was deemed more important to establish pairings, which would be able to develop rapport in the future. Here, an understanding of both the mentor and the student independently, was invaluable for effective matching; probably the most significant part of the program.

Training of the mentors was in the areas of child protection issues, adolescent development, communication, schools today and school community background. While the students were trained in basic communications, backgrounds of the banking community.

Volunteers NSW interviewed mentors, to identify if their motives and suitability as volunteers were appropriate and to provide mentors with a different perspective on volunteering and its commitment.

2. Group activities

To encourage a sense of group identity and to assist in breaking down barriers, a number of group activities were organised. These ranged from visits to the bank and the school, to a short trivia quiz, to a discussion game and model building. All of the activities were structured to provide a non-threatening environment in which the attitudes and values could be studied and absorbed, and the relationships between the pairs would be encouraged to develop.

Students and mentors met every second Thursday afternoon after lunch, for their structured meetings (about 11/2 hours each), which were either held at the Westpac building or at the school, allowing the students to develop their social skills in an unfamiliar setting.

3. Individual projects

The final phase of the program involved the students and mentors developing a project together, which they would work on until the final presentation evening, at which time they would give a brief account of their time together. The project was merely a vehicle to assist the relationships to develop. Structured meeting times were still used, but these were augmented and adapted by the individual pairs as their needs and the project demanded.

The project selection was guided, but was potentially very broad in scope, ranging through model making and community work, to research on football codes and school projects.

The final presentation evening provided both a time of celebration at the end of the program, and also a deadline. This deadline was deemed most effective in encouraging business people to work hard at achieving a desired result; in this case, a meaningful relationship with the student.

To see attitudes change, stereotypes demolished, and lives refocused; this program has been an unqualified success

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Organisation and Monitoring

At the start of the program, students and parents signed an agreement concerning participation and commitment to the mentor scheme, and giving general permission to attend the meetings as scheduled. Departmental and police checks on criminal background were conducted for all of the bank staff applying as volunteers for the program.

Students were given a diary to record their progress and to encourage them to consider their reactions to the challenges they encountered in the program. Attendances were recorded for both students and mentors, with additional mentors being available as 'reserves' if a mentor was absent. A series of evaluation meetings was conducted independently at the bank and the school to assess both student and mentor progress and to get some feedback on progress of both relationships and the program. At the end of the program evaluation surveys were distributed to mentors and their direct supervisors, students and their teachers and parents.

To overcome issues related to child protection, all meetings in the first two stages were structured. Any other communication between the mentor and student was via e-mail or telephone with the consent of the school coordinator. Later, any times that the student and mentor needed to meet for their project, such as on weekends or after school, special parental consent was required for each meeting and arrangements were made for emergency contact with school staff.

Cracking the Code

To see attitudes change, stereotypes demolished, and lives refocused; this program has been an unqualified success.

Students were asked about changes in attitude, their life goals, self-esteem and their perceptions of the program and its impact on them. All students ranked the program highly and reflected on the changes that they could recognise in themselves. One student wrote, "It helps the student's self esteem and selfconfidence. It shows that someone outside our area actually cares about me. It has boosted my confidence and self-esteem".

Parents identified favourable changes in the social skills and attitudes to life of the students. Comments made included: "Thank you for taking him under your wing and opening his eyes up to the real things" and " the experience has helped to widen his views on life". Some spoke of the school offering in this program something significant they felt could not be provided by them in the home.

School attendance pattern for the students in the program were significantly better than that of other students. There was a reduction in the number of in-school referrals for behaviour problems of this group. They were able to operate successfully in a completely different social setting to their norm. For the students they had 'cracked the code' that allows they to be confident in situations that they previously knew little about, and could still comfortably fit into their own world: a great life skill!

For the mentors the program was no less significant. They had their personal values challenged, their skills in relationships extended and their worldview broadened. The mentor's work supervisors also noted improvements in their ability to work in teams.

The Presentation Night

For one of the students, 'Patrick', the changes were outwardly small, but inwardly so significant. For Patrick, his life has been filled with rejection and failure in personal relationships for all of this 17 years. School was merely the next stage that Patrick struggled with before he was to move on, and in the meantime he would confront any difficulty with anger and anxiety. He was difficult to engage in some of the activities and at times left his mentor bewildered as to what was going on and a strong sense of rejection. (A salient lesson in itself for a 'successful' bank employee.)

The time spent on the project was even more difficult for Patrick, as this is when the relationships were really being strengthened. The mentor and student only managed a few visits to the art gallery as their project, and with little to show for it compared to some of the other pairs. On the eve of the presentation dinner, Patrick said he wouldn't be there, but I insisted that he explain this to his mentor over the phone. After much deliberation, he agreed to come, but would not make a talk like the others.

Come the presentation evening and just before we were to begin, finally Patrick arrived, but still obviously anxious. All of the other students and mentors had their say and it was wonderful time of celebration, affirmation and recognition of how far we had come together.

The final presentation was to be made by Patrick's mentor. He spoke honestly about their journey together, about their trials and of the seemingly insignificant trips to the art gallery. It was then that those present attested to the significance of the journey for Patrick. Here was a real success story. We all knew how he had changed. How he had been able to establish realistic life goals, how the anger had gone and how he had seen that someone believed in him and recognised his personal worth.

Later he was able to recognise and verbalise the significance of his personal journey and what a boost this provided for him personally. After the program, Patrick desperately wanted to continue the contact with his mentor but just didn't know what the outcome would be. That hasn't continued in this case, but the impact of the experience has been life changing. In the future, the relationship may still be rekindled, it would be so simple.

A mentor scheme in the school setting is not any easy thing to operate. It requires flexibility in the school organisation, commitment from all stakeholders and careful matching of the mentors. As the program was operating between two organisations and many individuals, communication is crucial to success. All of the students recognised that they had benefited personally from the program, although one student recognised that he did not benefit as much as many of the others.

Neil Worsley is Head Teacher, Social Sciences at Cleveland St High School. An ABC documentary, "Two Tribes" about the program was broadcast in May. Neil can be reached by email: neil_worsley@yahoo.com.au

"That's not the way we do things round here."

Rollo Browne talks to Ann McIntyre about what maintains the inclusive culture at Hurstville South Public School in Sydney. It's normal for boys to be involved.

Planning begins on the playground redesign. Year 5 & 6 boys on Student Council

Our school is in the southern suburbs of Sydney. There are 360 students from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, 64% are NESB from 26 different cultural groups. The school has developed a culture where all students have a role to play. There is no sense of 'one-upmanship' or aggression in the playground. The boys are heavily involved in school activities and that's seen as normal.

What makes it work?

We have a very active student leadership program. There's a Student Council which involves a boy and a girl from each class. They bring information and concerns from their class. They've done some amazing things. They changed the school uniform, created a school emblem, they met and are corresponding with the local State Member of Parliament about changing traffic conditions outside the school. (a dangerous suburban through road). One project was researching good leadership. The Student Council executive (4 boys and 4 girls) interviewed the Mayor of Kogarah Council in his Chambers about the way he goes about collaborative leadership.

The Student Council took early 2 years to embed. The kids are actively involved in setting the ground rules and we all operate under the idea that the key role of the leader is to serve others. We use the story of servant leadership a lot. I use it in important assemblies. I describe myself as a learner and that that any leadership role is to serve other people. The students tell it to each other, remind each other on the playground that their role is to look after each other.

The Student Council meets on Tuesdays after lunch in school time. We don't believe in meeting in lunchtime which excludes those who like to use free time to run around especially boys. It's in class because we consider it a valid learning experience.

This year the Student Council raised over $1000 for the Cancer Council. A friend of theirs in Year 6 died in January. The students initiated it. They made a plan at the beginning of the year under three headings: Making School a Safe and Happy place; Learning Things; and Helping Others. They raise money by things like pet competitions, discos, selling daffodils on Daffodil Day and so on.

The Student Council is seen by the students as being really important. The boys are highly involved and now they are fantastic models for others. Previously there was more encouragement needed from teachers but now the expectation is that they are involved.

Here's their list of criteria for selection as a student leader (both as class rep and student council executive):

- Committed to the welfare of other students
- Think creatively and have good ideas
- Able to organise things
- Keep other informed
- Be reliable, on time and get things done
- Be confident in expressing opinions
- Be responsible and set good example for others

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Two Year 6 boys playing nearby came over, stood near him and said, "That's not the way we do things around here. The older ones look after the younger ones in this place". The boy returned the ball without fuss...

Redesigning the Playground

We are a bit unusual in that the students have 2 votes on the School Council (as do 2 teachers and 2 parents). A boy and a girl join Council meetings and their presence makes a huge difference. It's been great, the meetings are very open and collaborative. The decision making is very transparent and Council has supported a number of Student Council initiatives.

A great example is the redesign of our playground. It used to be pure asphalt with a cricket net in the corner. Now we have new playground equipment, a volleyball court, a handball court and a multipurpose court (netball, basketball and tennis). The students interviewed companies that built playgrounds and supplied equipment. One issue was the 'soft fall' surface where companies were offering sand and pine bark. But that was the last thing they wanted because "you don't know what's in pine bark or sand". "Cats like to poo in sand." "There could be syringes too." They settled on supergrass on a layer of rubber.

On the Student Council, the older children play an important role. The Kinder & Year 1 kids bring up things and the older ones listen intently. For example the younger students wanted an area where they could crawl with trucks and toys as the asphalt was hard on knees. Now we have 8 x 5 m2 area of supergrass. There's also a passive playground area for quieter activities.

As part of the redesign, the students did a full survey of how the playground was used, who used which areas and for what (boys, girls, mixed), whether it was active or quiet. The process of sorting out playground usage was interesting. The students council sat around a map and looked at it. The boys said, "Well if we play in the court, can't you skip over there?" The girls said, "But it's on a slope." "So?" "Well have you ever tried skipping on a slope? The next playtime they went out and had a look. We already had a class roster for use of the playground equipment, now we have a roster for the basketball court (flat area) as well. Half of the time for the girls, half for boys.

The Waratah

We used to have a school uniform the same as every school around here, light blue and dark blue with a shield as the key symbol for the school. The Student Council wanted something that stood out and after discussion chose the waratah. We later found out that the aboriginal meaning is 'something beautiful that stands out from afar'. The other significant thing is that the organic symbol has now become a metaphor for our school. Instead of a metallic instrument of war (shield) we have a flower that actually is a circular collection of many small flowers on one stem. The older flowers on the outside protect the smaller flowers growing up from within. Around the outer flowers are large red leaves that hold the whole flower together. We use this story to capture what it means to be at our school. The older ones are there to protect the younger ones. The students tell it to each other.

Recently a boy joined our Year 4 class. He was active, pushy and somewhat aggressive in the playground. This lunchtime, he pinched the ball from some Year 2 boys playing handball. Two Year 6 boys playing nearby came over, stood near him and said, "That's not the way we do things around here. The older ones look after the younger ones in this place". The boy returned the ball without fuss.

Everyone Knows Someone Older

This idea is also picked up in our peer support system. Every student in Year 6 has a peer support group of one student from each year (1 leader, 6 students). The groups are mixed boys and girls and we try and balance the personalities. I feel it has a huge effect on the students as they all know someone older. The program has been developing over the last 5 years.

The session runs for 30 minutes on Tuesday afternoons. Three groups run in each classroom and the teacher can assist in groups where the leaders need help. The teachers also jot down notes about what they saw and give them to the students at the end of each session. Evaluation is done by the students in the once a week debrief for the leaders. This is done in groups of

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20. At the end of term students have a stack of notes giving them positive reinforcement and suggestions for what else they might do. Training Year 6 is done in Term 1 each year. They run the groups in the following 2 terms on such things as ways to solve problems, deal with peer group etc. The program itself is adapted from the Peer Support Foundation materials.

More Involvement Means Less Misbehaviour

Our data on misbehaviour, violence and assault in the school has shown a dramatic decline. It now feels like a happy and safe school. There are far fewer fights, in fact violence is very unusual.

The programs we have provide ways the children can be socially active, involved in creative problem solving, taking action rather than just surviving. There's little sign of boredom, disengagement or of peer groups retreating into gangs that resist involvement. In that sense, their social needs for power (feeling worthwhile, having an influence) are getting met within the school. The Year 6's in particular take leadership roles all the time. They are organising this year's farewell at the moment, including the catering, the dance program, invitations, decorations and so on. Boys are good role models, they display good social skills and maturity.

One other thing we do is the clubs program where every adult in the school presents something they are really good at. In that we all really act like mentors creating a positive experience about things we ourselves enjoy. The 22 of us (3 males) offer things like pottery, creative writing, stencilling, gardening and publishing. Kids select a leisure type activity for the term as we emphasise making a decision and sticking to it. The whole school is involved in groups of 12 - 15. Interestingly we're not getting a gender bias in activity selection. For example in my creative writing group, 75% are boys.

What happens at high school?

Local high schools are developing student councils but after the huge amount of decision making in Primary, students frequently go into Year 7 where there are few roles for them as they are perceived to be Juniors. I talked recently to 3 ex-students from our school, now in Year 11 who said, "Year 7 students can't do very much". I asked, "Well, what were you doing in Year 6, then?" They looked at each other, "Oh, we did a lot, didn't we?"

This is a real challenge for schools but high schools in particular. How do we take the students' huge amount of energy and enthusiasm for life and channel it into engaging worthwhile activities? We need to ensure that our students have not only the skills to survive but the creativity, care and commitment to make the world an even better place for us all.

Ann McIntyre has been principal of Hurstville South for 7 years - the Kindergarten kids are now in Year 6. She can be contacted on (02) 9580 2695.

The programs we have provide ways the children can be socially active, involved in creative problem solving, taking action rather than just surviving

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Teaching By Stealth

Using Games to Adjust Behaviour

Rollo Browne talks to Wilson McCaskill of The Game Factory, WA, about his use of games to teach pro-social skills and his methods of directly addressing behavioural issues. See the companion piece by Suzanne Temple and Graham Barnes for a description of the impact in one school.

They need to discover that self-control increases the opportunities for fun. Games can do this.

Why did you develop this approach?

Teachers wanted strategies to use with difficult kids. Games offered them the chance to change the way they interacted with children. It offered them the chance to get out of the classroom and play. Play is fundamentally attractive and I wanted teachers to use play and fun to create change.

Difficult kids often view school as a "tick or cross" place. A place where you're either right or wrong. Games give all children the chance to play in the middle ground of maybe, perhaps, nearly and a good try.

Many of the most difficult kids are boys. These boys often respond to school as if it was a game. A game called: 'Create Disruption, Gain Attention, Upset The Teacher And Destroy The Class Work'. To lure them from this game, teachers need to offer alternatives that are equally exciting and where the fun is legitimate.

Too many kids see school as a place where you learn how to do as you're told, where you satisfy teacher, where you learn about subjects that have little or no purpose. We have to change this. School has to become a place that offers you the chance to learn about yourself and others. Where you learn about making choices and accepting responsibility and all of the other skills that equip you to participate in and enjoy life. Subjects are important but the main subject is you and how you connect with all that is around you.

Students need to discover the skills of self-control. They need to discover that self-control increases the opportunities for fun. Games can do this. Kids often see rules as constraints, as things to be broken if you want to have fun. I use games to inform them that rules are the mechanism by which we connect with each other safely. They allow us participation and "release." They allow us to get involved, to forget our cares and woes. By sticking to rules everyone gets a go, gets a chance to be a part of something larger than themselves, gets a chance to drop self consciousness and image, gets the opportunity to express excitement, concern, support, surprise. Without rules there's chaos and it's chaos that is a constraint.

But as in life you can't enforce the rules of the game. People must choose to play by the rules. I tell students that I can't make them stick to the rules. I can only ask them to see the value of the rules and to stick to them as their contribution to the success and fun of the game.

How do you teach this?

By discussing issues before, during and/or after a game. Sometimes I say a lot. Other times I say little. Sometimes I encourage them to say a lot. Other times I ask them to just think about what's going on.

It is important to demonstrate that breaking the rules is less fun. For example with grade 2 and 3 (8 year olds), we could be playing a ball game and Jack deliberately throws the ball out. Everyone laughs.

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Wilson: Stop please. Jack threw the ball out. You saw that as funny didn't you.

Class: Yes.

Wilson: Unless one of us gets it, there's no ball to play with. How much fun will that be?

Student: None.

Wilson: Jack, are you intending to go and get the ball.

Jack: No.

Wilson: So if I say I won't get it either then none of us have got a ball to play with. The fun is over.

Student: I'll go and get it.

Wilson: Wait. Aren't you lucky Jack that someone is willing to do your dirty work.

Jack: (says nothing)

Wilson: But how do we know that if we get the ball you won't do it again.

Jack: (shrugs, says nothing)

Wilson: We don't do we. So including you in the game is risky. But I want you in the game because you're a valuable member of this class. So that's a risk I think is worth taking. But first we have to get the ball.

Student: I'll get it.

Wilson: No. It's not your job to do Jack's dirty work. No, this is something I want to do for Jack. I'll get the ball. Wait! Perhaps it would be better if we all showed how much we wanted Jack to be in the game by all of us moving to where the ball is. Would you all be willing to mover over to the ball?

Class: Yes.

Wilson: Gee, a lot of people are willing to do quite a bit for you Jack. That's good. But if the whole group has to shift each time you or someone else deliberately throws the ball out, we are going to have very little time playing the game and that's no fun. I think it would be easier and more considerate if you just chose to play the game properly. Can I ask you to do that?

Jack: (shrugs)

Wilson: Is there anything we would like to say to Jack?

Student 1: Come on Jack, just play properly.

Student 2: Don't throw the ball away.

Student 3: Just play will ya!

Wilson: The game has rules because it needs rules to work. When the game works, the game is fun. Jack made the wrong choice but we made one too. We chose to laugh when Jack threw the ball out. Throwing the ball out wasn't funny it was a waste of time. A waste of the time you could have spent having fun. It's now time for all of us to make better choices. It's time to have some fun. I'll get the ball.

The game has been stopped for about 2 minutes.

Winning and Putdowns

Winning is a hungry monster. If I were working with kids that were fixated on winning and dumping on others that made mistakes, I'd choose a game like Timeball.

The first time, the challenge is to get the ball all the way around the group. I make a big thing of it, raising the sense of challenge and excitement. We start the game and usually within 6 throws it has been dropped. I ask the kids to work out why this happened. I ask them not to say anything, just to think about it. Invariably someone will blurt out a put down. They will accuse say, Mary, of being a poor catch. I quickly interrupt them, reminding them that I asked them not to say anything but to think about it.

I start the game again by giving the ball to Mary. Usually the ball will again be dropped around the 6th throw. I point out it definitely wasn't Mary's fault this time. I ask them to keep thinking. Each time the ball drops, I try to remove the obvious conclusions and I challenge the truth of the put downs.

After about 6 or 8 starts the students have had time to get past reflex answers and discover more valid reasons for the game's lack of success. Reasons like, "he panicked - threw without thinking." "I threw the ball before she was ready to catch." We didn't communicate." "We're trying to go too fast." It takes persistence to get the class to slow down and develop their skills before trying to play the game quickly.

I believe kids need to know that we as teachers switch on before we try to switch them on.

What kind of focus do you take at different year levels?

Kindergarten:
Concentration and cooperation, listening skills and the enjoyment of contact (e.g. games that have them holding hands without pushing or shoving). Care and consideration (you don't have to always be boss and before you can be a boss you have to first be boss of yourself).

Grades 1 & 2:
Working cooperatively with a variety of people. Stretching their boundaries (looking out for comments like, "I can't do this", "he's useless at this", "this is stupid"). Pursuing better outcomes. Getting them to be comfortable with greater challenges. Encouraging them to see that the fun we can offer is directly proportional to the self-control they have.

Grades 3, 4 & 5:
Increasing the stress levels in the games and encouraging them to relax and stay calm. Challenging their powers of self control by generating more pressure. Using remarks like, "I'll bet you panic", "There's no way you can handle this", "I'm only going to say the rules once only." I make a lot of noise during the games by shouting and cheering to upset their concentration. I try to distract them, shift their focus. I create a kind of chaos and ask them to bond together and deal with it. Blindfold games are great for this. Life can be pretty crazy and chaotic for a lot of kids. Playing games in this way can help kids cope with the pressures of daily living.

Grades 5 & 6:
I push for greater outcomes. The more trust, cooperation and respect there is in the group, the more I can push. I encourage them to surprise themselves, to take risks, to challenge their self-expectations and then to be all right when things don't work. It's important that they can let things go. That they have the self-control to choose their emotions. It's wonderful to see kids realise that they can choose to be happy, they can choose to leave a negative feeling behind. When needed, I go back and do Grade 1 games. Some boys still don't have Grade 1 social skills.

I make this shift backwards positive by saying something like, "I'm going to play this game at its very simplest. You deserve the chance to experience the game at this level before trying the tough stuff".

Boredom?
Some kids get bored. They want me to alleviate their boredom all the time. If I do, it's disempowering. "If you're bored, you can make it easier. Don't do stuff that makes it worse. If you listen, stay alert and participate, it goes faster. If you stick with that bored attitude it gets harder." I say, "Dump the attitude. It's your choice."

I also think it's very important that we do not appear bored as teachers. Kids deserve to know that you're interested and energised by them. They also need to know that you teach because it's exciting. I don't think that's too much to ask. I believe kids need to know that we as teachers switch on before we try to switch them on.

How do you work on gender issues?

Quite often I start by separating the boys and girls. They usually love that. Then I play games that focus on communication and intimacy (e.g. Amoeba Hula, making letters/shapes). The girls usually do better than the boys who tend to get aggressive, abusive and centre on put downs and push and shove behaviour. The boys hate losing and the loss of confidence and self esteem from failure has them entering into a downward spiral of negative and aggressive behaviour.

I stop the game.

Wilson: Girls, why are the boys losing?

Girls: We're better.

Wilson: What does that mean? Let me tell you what I observe. The boys are fighting each other and you are cooperating. (This is said without scolding. The tone of voice suggests a desire to help) Now, are you doing something the boys can't do? Well I certainly don't think so. Boys, what do you think?

Boys: (Usually a low mumble with no clear answer)

Wilson: Boys, are you telling me boys can't do this?

Boys: (More positive but usually with a degree of resentment) No.

Wilson: Then it's something you're doing or not doing that is making things difficult.

A boy: But we've got Andrew (Andrew becomes the scapegoat for the lack of collective skills). We can't because he.....

Wilson: OK. I'm going to run an experiment. Andrew, come with me. Mary, you're doing very well in that group, so you join the boys and we'll run the game again.

Boys: Oh, we don't need her (or words to that effect).

Wilson: So, you want to stay together. Good. There must be something good going on. Now all we have to do is make it better. Would it help if you started two steps in front of the girls. Is that all right girls?

Girls: Yea, sure etc.

Boys: No way. We don't need that etc.

Wilson: Well we have to find some way to make the game fair. To give you boys an equal chance.

Boys: Starting together is fair etc.

Wilson: Ok, let's try it again then.

Again the boys lose. The tension is rising and the desire to give up and abuse each other is peaking amongst the boys.

How do you manage this deterioration in behaviour?

Wilson: Sit down everyone please. Can you all feel the tension? Can you feel the knotting in your stomach? Boys, tell me how you're feeling?

Boys: (Lots of grumbling and moaning) Don't know.

Wilson: Well do you feel good?

Boys: No.

Wilson: Then you do know how you feel. Are you pleased with the way you have behaved?

Boys: No.

Wilson: Do you feel upset, annoyed, down?

Boys: Yes.

Wilson: Girls, how do you feel?

Girls: Good, great, proud etc.

Wilson: The game isn't here to make you feel down boys. I played the game for fun. You did something that changed the game. You used it as an excuse to have a fight, to show who was boss, to pick on someone, to go through your own story and not what the game was about. The game is a chance for you to let go of whatever bad things have happened to you today, of whatever troubles you have and have some fun. Ask yourself this question. Do you deserve to have some fun? If the answer is yes, then make the choice to get involved in a cooperative and caring way. Go for the game and have some fun.

We start again and I look for every opportunity to accolade good behaviour and to make supportive and esteem raising emarks. I don't repeat the same game over and over. I might try a new game or say we'll have another go at it at the next session.

How long does it take for kids to 'get it'?

It can be done quite quickly. I define a games session as being about:

- Discovering who you are, what you do and why you do it.
- Whether this works for you and for the people you're working with.

Do you deserve to have some fun? If the answer is yes, then make the choice to get involved in a cooperative and caring way. Go for the game and have some fun.

- **Whether you're the sort of person who likes to have fun.**

I advise using games for interrupting what's going on in the classroom. In less than 5 minutes you can change the whole feel of a classroom and get back on board with the lesson.

As the teacher there are several crucial elements:

- Tone.
- Language. Mix in a sprinkle of kids language "it's not cool", "lets get some buzz happening here."
- The manner in which you deliver the message must show that you believe in them and that you want them to benefit. It will make life better. Most of my work with teachers comes down to whether they believe in children and whether they can reaffirm this in their reasons for being a teacher. One critical issue is that we cannot ask students for self-control if we don't have it ourselves. The issue of empowerment is vital and there are boundaries. No child can be empowered with the capacity to spoil your day.

After sessions, teachers are often hesitant, saying, "I can't play those games like you do." That's true, no-one can be someone they're not. You have to make the games your own. The beauty of it is that games are a natural form of engagement. Everyone wants to have fun. It's also practical. Every time a teacher tries a game they get better at it.

What do you get teachers to notice to tell if it's affecting their kids positively?

To notice if it's working for kids over time, look for a maturing in the group. Having played games they will have opinions and ideas about the rules and conditions that permit fruitful interaction. They will also have a lot to say about the idea of "choice." The second thing to look for is their ability to discuss behaviour. For the teacher it is vital that discussion is done in a non critical tone, and that we use the language of choice. I never call choices 'bad', but we do make wrong choices all the time. If a boy abuses another I call this a wrong choice and ask him to apologise. Say he does so in a negative insincere tone, again I say "wrong choice again. What was wrong with it?" If they get it, they have another go. If not, I say, "If you can't see it you'll have to stay in the place you are at. No anger feels good. It means you'll stay where you are until you choose differently. A sincere apology opens a door to better feelings. Talk to me when you're ready to open that door."

Other outcomes include:

- Enjoyment of interactive experiences, like cooperative work.
- An increase in a student's circle of friends. Having genuine friends helps bullies to stop bullying.
- A happier disposition to school. The feeling that teachers are no longer on the opposite side. The kids are closer, you are both on the same side.

There's often a backlash of good feeling that you have to walk away from. Some boys begin 'hero-worshipping' their teachers. The big danger is that female teachers get cast in the role of Mum. Often I see, say, six year old boys looking for a male mentor and can't find one. Some female teachers that show discipline and strength become substitutes and the boy dotes on the female teacher. You will know that boy's history (he may not get much nurturing), you can see he's responding to you, he may have no friends and he wants a closeness that excludes others. He's looking for a Mum. You can be a teacher, a guide, a friend but not his Mum. The best thing teachers can do is empower a child with the belief that he can learn and be in charge of his life. Being his Mum when you can't fulfill the role completely can disempower him.

Applying games to class structures?

One way to teach appropriate behaviour in class is to make a game out of it. I'd recommend the following in Grade 4 and over. Stipulate various times of day for different interactions, for example, the next 10 minutes as quiet time and 'no contact' time. Half an hour later, have 10 minutes where no-one speaks over a certain level. Students earn points for their house or faction. There are penalty points for deliberately provoking other people to break the rule. Students have to work out how to help each other. The point is that it gives the students the means to observe each other and counteracts the pack mentality that sometimes takes over in groups.

One Year 7 class uses a variation of this approach for a whole day at a time. The teacher creates a set of say 15 flash cards. At any time during the day and while other work is going on she displays a flash card for 3 seconds. They are only displayed once and the students can't write them down. No-one calls them out. At the end of the day each faction gets together its best representative to give all the words in order. The students love it. During breaks they work out who has seen what and when and figure out who will speak first. If they make a mistake they put up their next best representative.

A final thought?

It's good for teachers to get out of the classroom and play. Teachers deserve some fun too. Games are something that all teachers can get involved in and in so doing broaden, strengthen and invigorate their relationship with the kids of their classroom, school and community. Games are for growing and it's good to grow.

Wilson McCaskill and the Game Factory work out of Kaff Theatre in Perth. Wilson trained as an actor and refined his approach by running hundreds of sessions with students.. All games referred to are described in the "Games For Growing" Manual published by the Game Factory (fax (08) 9447 7204 for order form). Wilson can be contacted on phone (08) 9309 3992, email kaff@iinet.net.au.

Beating Bullying with Balls and Balloons

Suzanne Temple outlines the strategic use of games to affect the school climate at Wickham District High School. Graham Barnes, the specialist teacher applying these methods with targeted groups and in PE, describes the program and its effect on boys behaviour. See also the accompanying story 'Teaching By Stealth'

The population is transient and broken relationships are not uncommon

Wickham District High School is the only school in an isolated mining town in north-west Western Australia. There are 288 primary (K - Year 7) and 53 secondary students (Years 8 - 10). The school had a reputation of 'not doing anything about discipline and especially bullying'. This perception was not accurate, of course, but there was an essence of truth in the fact that there was a high percentage of aggressive and bullying behaviour especially in the boys that were not really responding to the punitive discipline processes. The primary and secondary sections of the school are completely separate and there is rarely any interaction. Bullying is very different on each site. In the secondary section it is less obvious and consists mostly of teasing and humiliation - more of the emotional harassment type of bullying. In the primary section bullying is much more physical with games in the playground sometimes ending in fights or physical intimidation.

The town is made up of mining company employees who are involved in the iron-ore shipping process; a significant Aboriginal community and others who provide services such as teachers, nurses etc. The people are mostly young and are either unemployed or on exceptionally good wages (not the service providers of course!). The population is transient and broken relationships are not uncommon. Many people are living thousands of kilometres from family and other support networks in a harsh climate (when it is not lovely).

In all, it is pretty much a 'man's town!' The relative youth of the people in the community means that sporting activities are at the heart of the social interaction. Sporting prowess is regarded above all other personal achievements and aggressive behaviour is accepted as the norm, or at least tolerated. I am of course generalising and there are many who would shudder in horror at these comments but the truth is that a majority of people do accept that it is OK to resolve conflict in an aggressive way. I have often been told by an angry parent that "I've told my son to stand up for himself and not to put up with it. If someone threatens him he has my permission to give him a good whack!" The school was suffering from these attitudes and bullying was a serious problem.

Ignoring it

Well, how do you fight the need to win at all costs and the attitude that: 'If you can't fix it - fight it'? First the teachers needed to be convinced that there were some strategies that worked. For years we have been advised to ignore negative behaviour. That's what we did. However, the inappropriate behaviour is then given free reign or actually encouraged to escalate until the child has the attention he is looking for. Teachers felt at a loss to come up with strategies to address such a whole-scale attitude problem and they felt understandably unsupported.

At the beginning of last year we decided to use the games approach to modifying behaviour and hopefully this would have an effect on the whole school climate. This was based on my previous experience using these methods in Perth. After a number of discussions, we invited Wilson McCaskill to spend a week in the school to work with all classes and their teachers for one session each; do a few sessions with kids we had already identified as 'at risk' (the bullies and those who exhibited victim behaviours); facilitate some sessions for teachers and also run one for parents. The key to this was releasing Graham Barnes, the Health and PE Co-ordinator, to work in tandem with Wilson throughout the whole week.

Most of all they have an opportunity to reflect on why they feel the way they do in certain situations and how they can deal with these feelings more appropriately

In the interests of accountability we included this program as a strategy in our Students At Educational Risk Policy along with other strategies aimed at raising the assertiveness of all of the students. We collected data on inappropriate behaviour referrals to the Administration to account for the value of the focus.

What happened next?

After this intensive week, Graham was 'up-skilled' in the counselling methods and the games themselves. We also had some teachers who felt enthusiastic (to varying degrees) but committed to 'giving it a go'. We identified a senior (9 - 12 years old) and a junior (6 - 8 years old) target groups of 'at risk' children and gained their parents' permission for them to be involved. These target groups were time tabled for separate sessions with the specialist teacher. Groups were between 10 and 15 students, mostly boys but some girls too.

Graham continued to work with the target groups as well as integrating the games into the general PE classes for all of the children. Classroom teachers conducted lessons to address bullying and victim behaviours through the Health Ed. Program. We also promoted the program through the school newsletter, community notice boards and local print media to gain understanding and support from the community in general.

School Outcomes

The most obvious indication of the success we have experienced in this is the data we have collected over the last three years. There has been an exciting and significant decrease in the number of aggressive/bullying incidents with a drop of 50% from 106 in 1997 to 53 in 1999. Another heartening trend is that of the 34 students who have been referred to Administration for this sort of behaviour only 16 of them have repeated the offence this year. It is not perfect but the data clearly indicates that it is working.

We are now experiencing a change in attitude and I have noticed that there has also been an increase in the number of children who will report incidents of harassment or bullying. The kids now understand what is unacceptable behaviour and have experienced different ways of dealing with their own feelings and anger. They have a chance to experience frustration and anger in a controlled environment. Most of all they have an opportunity to reflect on why they feel the way they do in certain situations and how they can deal with these feelings more appropriately. In the past, I believe, we have protected children from situations in which they are likely to experience stress, fear, panic, anger and other strong emotions. They need to practise!

Graham Barnes spoke to Rollo about his view of the program

"The Target groups, as they are known, are made up of children suggested by teachers. Most couldn't control their anger and couldn't co-operate. I knew these kids and they knew me. Last year I ran two 40 minute sessions per week during class time, usually in the undercover area.. The group at first identified themselves as the bad kids, but I challenged them to find other reasons. "Cos I fight a bit" said one. "I lose my temper", said another.

This year more kids joined and there's only 1 session per week. I further divided the Target groups because I had noticed the more sporty kids were dominating the activities. Now the groups are more evenly matched and I have noticed there was less emphasis on making sure you had an athletic kid on your side. There was still some push, shove and shout but nowhere near to the same extent.

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What makes the games approach work for you?

From watching Wilson and trying things out myself the most important things is the message that, "This is fun" and 'In order to have fun, we have to get along". This matches my philosophy. School should be fun. I got the hang of the method after 2 - 3 weeks of trying it out. After that the games started to work and within another 2 - 3 weeks the kids realised that they were there to have fun and get on together. The kids 'got it'.

I knew it was working when the Target groups were more keen for their sessions that normal PE. None of them have ever wanted to sit out of sessions. You might think bringing all the aggressive kids together would make the group unmanageable. But we've avoided building a 'hoon' culture because we're out there having fun. They're competing mostly against time or against me, not against each other. Occasionally I do it just to see how they handle themselves. I'm big on rules. If you can't play by the rules you have to sit out. They accept that. Some are starting to make the link to class, others have a way to go yet. It's not a cure-all but it helps some kids make important steps.

The games themselves are fun, simple, high energy and adaptable from K - Year 7. There are few rules. I've noticed more rules there are the more goes wrong. I've used the whole range of games, but found 'Time Ball' particularly useful. 'Chair Relay' and 'Alphabet Combo' are brilliant for co-operating. Although the games are significant, but the relationship with the boys, knowing them, playing and joking is just as important. The games are only as good as the person.

"Can you handle this?"

How I learnt to deal with difficult moments was critical. The two best lines I learnt were:

- When a boys does a dummy spit in a game and dumps on someone else, I say, "Can you handle this?" I'm referring to his own emotional state. "Or do you need to walk away?" Amazingly, they usually say "Yes" and drop it immediately and the game goes on. Some do take time out and rejoin the game later. I find this works from about Year 4 up.
- For kids who like to muck up and show off, I interrupt, "Hey! It's not cool to be a fool." They look at each other and again drop it. For the younger kids (Year 1 & 2), for example, playing 'Circle Ball' (a soft ball is passed round the circle right hand to left hand to the next right hand without throwing) when they muck it up, I say "This is a really sad moment, guys. Look at what's happening" Again they look at each other, nod and drop it.

What have been the effects on the boys?

The boys have picked up strategies for dealing with being teased and stirred or when others got angry at them. They realised how important it is to co-operate for the game to work. For one boy I noticed a big improvement in his overall attitude to playing and reacting to others.

Recently some new kids came to school - for want of better words you could say they were feral. One of the Year 4 Target boys was getting stirred by them. The teacher commented that she was amazed how he controlled himself for 3 - 4 minutes before losing it. Eighteen months ago he would have 'snotted' the kid immediately. This sounds small but it is significant.

You might think bringing all the aggressive kids together would make the group unmanageable. But we've avoided building a 'hoon' culture because we're out there having fun.

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The kids stand up for themselves more without fighting and they handle their reactions better

Another example was in a Year 3 class which just would not work outside of their friendship groups. The teacher had difficulty getting them to do any groupwork. In order to get the groups to mix I played 'Amoeba Hula' in PE (students have 5 seconds to get say 3 people in a hoop, 1 point to them if they can, 1 point to teacher if not). They kept trying to join their friends' hoops and never won a game (best of 5) for weeks. One day this happened:

Teacher: "We're going to play Amoeba Hula again and I really hope you can win. You've got to do something different to win this game. What do you think?"

Class: Silence, thinking

Boy: "It doesn't matter who you get into the hoop with."

Teacher: "Why?"

Boy: "Because we're out there to win the game against you. We don't have to stay with our friends." They won shortly afterwards.

I mostly notice the difference in behaviour at recess and lunch. There's been a big reduction in schoolyard incidents. The kids stand up for themselves more without fighting and they handle their reactions better.

Last Words

Suzanne: "We are pleased with the results so far at Wickham. Teachers are comfortable in the knowledge that there are some positive and practical ways to manage difficult children. Our long-term goals are to eradicate all aggressive behaviour, by continuing to support the games program. A program I can highly recommend to all educators and parents."

Graham: "I'd prefer to see these games incorporated every day or two as daily fitness and used by the classroom teachers. There are mobs of games and the rules can be changed around.

"When we started we didn't have much of a behaviour management policy. Kids were playing rough, parents were ringing up. The teachers were inspired by the staff development with Wilson but it passed and they moved on to the next thing. My advice to others is to get enthusiastic. This is fun. Schools should be fun.

"These games work. You'll see things change - the younger the kids the greater the change.

"We'll continue the program next year because it's an important part of education and it's essential to maintaining a good school climate. Phys Ed'ers would be good for the job as they're used to games but really anyone can do it."

Suzanne Temple is Acting Principal at Wickham District High School. She can be contacted on 08 9187 1717. Graham Barnes is a PE Teacher currently acting as Deputy Principal, Primary, contact 08 9187 1089.

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Is It Worth It?

Fathers and Sons talk about Violence.

Video review by Julie Ruff (English/Social Justice and Equity) and Year 10 students at Weeroona College, Bendigo in. Victoria.

My Year 9 and 10 classes have been discussing violence as an issue; this included formal debate and responding to Reginald Rose's play, 'Twelve Angry Men' and 'The Outsiders' by S. E. Hinton. I wanted to further challenge key issues such as fathering, manhood and relationships, especially in relation to young men's violence and to help them find more satisfactory ways of interacting in society.

The video 'Is It Worth It?' is 25 minutes long and features interviews with a wide cross section of fathers and sons with real stories of their own violence, interspersed with clips from the movie 'Once Were Warriors'.

The accompanying manual is extremely useful for teachers as it provides a brief summary of the issues in each subject area, places the video in context of the students' lives and then poses appropriate questions for discussion. It also responsibly alerts the facilitator to possible responses of viewers and offers debriefing strategies.

The responses by the Year 10 classes to the video were most positive. Here are typical comments from students:

"I responded most to listening to different people talk about how violence had affected their lives and others in it. It made it seem much more real."

"It was good how they showed two generations; the father who experienced violence and passed it down and the sons who suffered violence and aren't going to pass it down. It shows people that the perpetrators of violence are also victims and you can start to understand how to stop it."

"I saw ten year old kids talking about bashing people. They have to learn it somewhere and it made me realise my sister would be affected by my violence, and even though I don't hit her, she might become violent too."

Many boys responded strongly to the ten-year-old kids telling how they were already using violence. Students were interested to note that ultimately the parents and children interviewed held the same views about violence. Also, most felt that one boy's response was too brief when asked what he thought of violence; they needed to know how it affected him, whether he went to jail or if he was ever praised.

The use of film clips from 'Once Were Warriors' was powerful and sparked animated discussion. Some students, however, who hadn't seen the film, commented that they didn't sufficiently understand the context of the characters. The danger of stereotyping Maori males was also highlighted but the booklet discusses this issue.

Most students agreed the video would work best as a preventative strategy with Years 7 - 9 students "so they know how pathetic violence is, before they fall into any habits". However the film clips would not be suitable for a younger age. Year 10 students also felt they now have the strength to know their rights, whereas the video could help younger students to know that violence is always unacceptable. My view is that while these comments are valid, including the restriction rating on the clip's coarse language; the older students would gain most from the challenge the video offers as they are more insightful and connected with their sense of self and ability to make choices.

The video encouraged the boys to explore what constitutes violence; they now appreciate that it is not only physical, but includes the use of silence and verbal responses and that they must identify and stop behaviour that can affect others in a harmful manner. Having watched the video, many admitted to now viewing tough, violent people differently. They felt they might now really think how tragic people's lives are, as a result of their anger. The video also stimulated positive discussion about masculine stereotypes and expectations about fathers.

This resource would be especially useful for Anger Management Classes or individual counselling of violent students or parents. It also proved a valuable, stimulating tool for discussion in English and touched many students who might not otherwise be included in anger management programs. One fairly aggressive student wrote " It was a very educational video and taught me stuff about my relationship with dad". When asked if it had helped him question images of violence, he said, "Yes, I am never going to fight again."

Using this video in a mixed classroom of males and females contributed positively to exploring many aspects of the issues of violence, but I concede that in small group counselling, single sex groups may be more appropriate. Working with violence or aggression issues can be highly sensitive. The 'Is It Worth It?' video and booklet are valuable resources for teachers.

Verdict: Valuable
Target group: High School, see comments on Years 7 & 8
Cost: $50 Schools & non gov't sector, $70 other, add $5 postage & handling

Video available from Shopfront Youth Health and Information Service, PO Box 823, Salisbury SA 5183, ph 08 8281 1775, fax 08 8285 7159.

Helping Young People Get Through Tough Times

Reach Out! Web Site: www.reachout.asn.au

Reach Out is an initiative of the Inspire Foundation, originally to do something about youth suicide and depression but now it's to help young people in trouble. This year they ran the Reach Out Rural & Regional Tour (RORRT) to country areas in NSW. . The website was launched in March 1998. Since the tour the website usage has climbed from 500 to 4000 per week.

The most popular thing on the site is 'Dream It, Scream It'. You write any dream, anything frustrating you. It goes into the rocket. There's a count down and it's launched into space. The website won the Australian Internet Award for Best Community Site in 1998 & 1999.

"In our school the SRC helped advertise the tour. Every year knew about it. SRC reps held year level meetings and gave out the wallet cards. The idea was to help out teenagers in times of trouble. We are isolated where we are. Such a small community. Some people hide it more. It's pushed away - "that's life".

"A mate went to the site to see how he could help someone. Basically it doesn't tell you exactly what to do. But there are points on what you could try without being invasive. Also there's a list of places in your area where you could go for help. It's a good site, very personal, it's anonymous for both guys and girls.
John Martin, Year 11 Gloucester High School, NSW

"The site makes sense. Boys are so reluctant to go for help but they go for computers - it might even be easier to counsel anonymously. They don't like to be seen coming to the counsellor. I find I get few boys who are self referred but having been once they tend to come back.

"It fills a big gap where kids don't have access to anybody. It gives ideas for seeking help. I do tell kids about it. They're interested and take the cards. But many of those who need counselling do not have computers at home."
School Counsellor, Broken Hill District, NSW

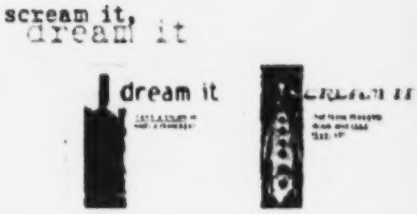
"In our school Year 7 is quite large. By Year 8 & 9 a lot give up and then leave. Drop out. I know a few who don't know what to do. There's not a lot out here to do. Everyone's ambition is to finish school and leave.

When RORRT came to our school they talked about depression which isn't mentioned much here. There's nowhere to go, but if there was, everyone would know about it. The difficulty is having to take the initiative. The website is good because people can check it at home. It's still a problem where it has to be looked up at school. During Yr 11 classes you can appear to be looking for your photo while you access other stuff. Yr 7s are more open. So, get them young, if more Year 7s can get help it's a good thing.

One kid I know used it for a friend. He found what he was looking for. Helped him a lot. He used the ideas and directed people to other services. The website is still too feminine. It could still use a bit of work.
Shane Diprose, Year 11 Coomealla High School, NSW

"One of the things on the tour was that we a digital camera and put photos of students onto the site. Schools can get have a website within RORRT so they put up pictures, a profile of the school. This is very popular and drives boys to the Reach Out site website. Where we had two men under 25 years old touring, the boys took more interest.

"What's different is that boys have complete control over the relationship, what they say, what they reveal, which is different at, say, a call centre. They can individualise the site to suit themselves."
Jono Nicholas, Content Coordinator, Reach Out!



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The men and boys program

THE PROGRAM IS BASED IN THE **FAMILY ACTION CENTRE** at the University of Newcastle, NSW. The Family Action Centre delivers support programs to marginalised and transient families using staff co-ordinators and trained volunteers. Action research, dissemination of information at all levels and advocacy are core features of the Centre's activities. Since the Men and Boys Project was set up in 1996 (initially as The Men's Health Project), men's and boys' well being has become a broad community concern reaching into areas of education, juvenile justice, cancer screening, fathering and suicide. At the start of 1997 The Men's Health Project was reorganized to reflect the broader focus of the Family Action Centre. The three programs which make up the Men and Boys Project are:

...men's & boys' well being has become a broad community concern

BOYSWORK - working with schools and with boys to improve health and education

Boys' behaviours and attitudes are increasingly being regarded as serious problems in our community. Boys low level of literacy and poor academic achievement are being raised alondside traditional concerns with aggression and risk taking. A key factor in all of these areas is boys' strongly held notion of how "to be a man". Boyswork refers to the newly developing ways of dealing with boys, individually and in groups, which recognises the importance of male identity. It includes skills and knowledge about boys and men.

THE FATHERCARE INITIATIVE - encouraging positive father involvement in communities

FatherCare promotes a positive social role for all adult males. Father Care recognises that a new style of fathering is needed, one based on the needs of children for mutually respectful relationships with men. This initiative stresses men's social role in the community (through volunteering for example) as well as in the family.

IMPROVING MEN'S HEALTH - research and teaching for better health

Includes the full spectrum of health from illness and disease to physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Much of the research and health service delivery focussed on men has been based on a narrow disease model of health. This approach, as seen by men's poor health outcomes, is now judges to be inadequate. A more social model, incorporating men's identity, is being developed for a range of issues from prostate cancer and road traffic to depression and nutrition.

Seminars

Since its inception in January 1996, the Men & Boys Project has provided seminars for education, health, welfare and social service to professionals in all states of Australia. Parent meetings and demonstration sessions with boys have been held in remote rural as well as inner city locations.

Research

Research has been completed on men's health priorities, boy's needs, father's approaches to teaching driving, and men's behaviours in pharmacies. Action Research into the schools approaches of engaging boys in learning, and to teaching fathering issues is underway.

Publications

A range of publications on boys' education, fathering and men's health have been produced and are widely used in human services.

The project is managed by Richard Fletcher

For further information please contact: The Men and Boys Program
Ph: 02 49 21 0739 Fax: 02 49 218680 Email: fmrf@cc.newcastle.edu.au

Boys in Schools - Resources for Teachers Order Form

Invoices can not be sent for less than $100.00.

Make cheques payable to: Men & Boys Program

Send: Family Action Centre, Men & Boys Program
The University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308

Title	Pub. No	Price	Qty	Total
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (4 issues)	970	$35.00		
Being a Man Photopak	979	$125.00		
Boys in Schools	961	$24.95		
Getting Dads Involved in Schools	978	$14.50		
Improving Boys' Education (a manual for schools)	973	$40.00		
Man's World: A Game for Young Men A B-Team Production	974UK	$110.00		
Boyz Rulez Posters	981	$28.00		
FatherCare Posters	983	$48.50		
Lets Get Changed Lads	982UK	$34.50		
Men's Health Posters	991	$29.00		
Leadership in Boys' Education	992	$29.95		

Prices are subject to change without notice Total$

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